New Republic

JANUARY 24, 1949

# THE NEW PRESIDENT:

## HARRY TRUMAN ON HIS OWN NOW

★

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# WASHINGTON WIRE

SEVENTY-SIX CENTS out of every budget dollar now go to war—past, cold or future. Only the Kremlin can reduce this for us. That's Truman's position in discussing foreign affairs on Capitol Plaza, Inaugural Day.

Truman's approach to foreign affairs makes a divided pattern. He was willing to junk sacred diplomatic orthodoxy in the proposed Vinson mission to Moscow. He would do so again. He has specifically stated a belief that some members of the Politburo want understanding with us. He has picked as Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who still clung to the hope of working out a Soviet agreement 'way beyond the point his critics thought reasonable. Furthermore, the President is keeping the US defense budget below $15 billion when the armed services want $23 billion. That is a major foreign-affairs decision, too, make no doubt of it, for the $8 billion involved is the difference between assuming that peace is possible and war is inevitable.

**On the other hand,** Truman will not relax the cold war unless Moscow shows a new mood. Mrs. Roosevelt returned here last week from the Paris UN sessions. When asked if she felt she had made "any progress at all in dealing with the Russians," she returned a flat "No." Her attitude is typical. She is not hopeless. But she has learned, she says, that Soviet spokesmen must always be treated as government representatives: "You can never have the feeling of talking to another human being."

While that attitude persists the Truman program will go on. A feature is the assumption at top levels here that the US is getting into a better position in the slow struggle with Moscow—China to the contrary notwithstanding. Now comes the new phase, the momentous North Atlantic security alliance—the greatest change in US foreign policy since the Monroe Doctrine. It should be the big story of 1949. The Administration attributes this development to fear of Soviet aggression.

The treaty will be fought through Congress on that basis. There is danger that getting it passed will produce new anti-Soviet hysteria, new spy scares, new armament costs. Truman seems to accept that as a calculated risk. He will fight doggedly for the treaty, doggedly for his defense estimates.

Without disrespect to the rocklike character of Marshall, the latter's departure, with that of banker Lovett, seems like a crack in the military-business alliance from which Truman got his advisers in his first Administration. Young James Webb, 42, former Budget Bureau head, who replaces Lovett, fought for the $15 billion defense ceiling. Acheson, unlike Marshall, will not turn instinctively to military men for assistants.

The grim farce of pretending that the military men are backing the Truman defense budget has started. Actually by every means in their power they will try to get their amounts raised. The three rival secretaries are not only battling Truman but each other. It is a popularity contest before Congress. Under Truman's proposals each of the three would get about $4.5 billion. Each seeks more, relatively and absolutely. Air Secretary Symington, in particular, has zoomed off in a series of preliminary maneuvers apparently designed for quick restoration of the "70-group" Air Force which Truman cut to 48.

**Acheson showed** bland interest, but no timidity, at his senatorial confirmation hearings. Another man under the blinding kleig lights might have dodged the inevitable question about Alger Hiss. Acheson spoke boldly. He

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announced "past and continuing friendship" for Donald and Alger Hiss. To another leading question, from Senator Wiley (R, Wis.), he replied with calm candor that, so far as he is personally concerned, he favors treaty ratification by majority vote of both Houses—*not* the constitutional two-thirds of the Senate alone.

The word for Acheson is "elegant." With his blond Guardsman's mustache, he looks as though he had just stepped from a Regency coffee-house, lifting a ruffled hand to thrust a pinch of snuff into his formidable nose. But there is another, lighter side. To Acheson is attributed the characteristic quip which considerably reduces our awe of him: "All I know I learned at my mother's knee, and at other low joints." Truman has had four Secretaries of State in four years, which is a lot of Secretaries, but none like Dean Acheson.

**Able government** economist Louis H. Bean has been projecting steel-consumption trends into the 1950's, and says capacity should be 115 to 120 million tons for prosperity conditions. But the steel industry is talking of only a 98-million-ton capacity by the end of 1950. The industry thinks demand will fall off. Failure to expand capacity can produce that very slump, of course, which the industry fears. And that explains Truman's breath-taking threat of federal steel-making.

**Notes.** A big congressional lobby investigation seems increasingly likely. . . . It looks as though Truman would pay off his political debt to farmers with the doubtful gift of higher support prices. . . . Fulton Lewis Jr.'s attack on the loyalty clearance of Frank Graham, president of the University of North Carolina, doesn't seem to be getting anywhere. . . . When Harold Stassen in a "Forum of the Air" radio debate the other day charged that no great advance like penicillin had ever come from a country with a medical-insurance plan, Oscar Ewing quietly pointed out that penicillin came from England.

*Washington* T. R. B.

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# HARRY TRUMAN ON HIS OWN NOW

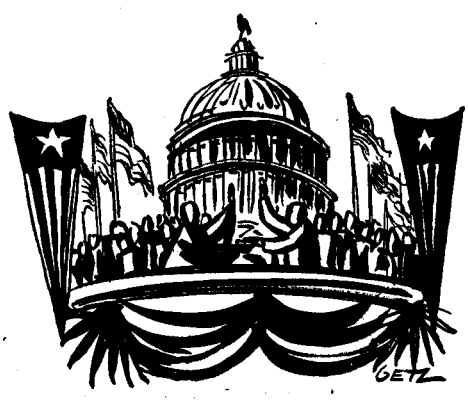
THE INAUGURAL OATH which Harry Truman has taken is perhaps the greatest commitment that any man can accept. The presidential tasks, of administration, initiation and inspiration, are far beyond one man's capacity. And yet the power of the President is so great that the years of his service may be identified with his personality. Just as the New Deal expressed the exuberant and adventurous spirit of Franklin Roosevelt, so the Fair Deal will express the character and ambitions of Harry Truman.

No two personalities could be farther apart. And yet the program which Truman has laid before America carries forward the New Deal in proposals as bold as Roosevelt ever made. Those who remember the Truman of 1946 and 1947 are asking: Is this another program for the record, or does it correspond to the real convictions of a President who at 64 is developing into a new personality?

We believe that Truman has not greatly changed in office, but that the impact of his character on today's problems will make the Fair Deal a memorable time in American social progress.

Truman is not a man to lead a crusade. Unlike Roosevelt, he cannot easily conceive or dramatize new ideas. He has a continuing dislike for "professional liberals" and their passion for changing America. If he changes the face of America it will not be according to any book he has read or any doctrine; it will correspond to the human needs that he has felt.

A onetime dirt farmer born of pioneer parents; a business failure along with millions of other Americans; a Democrat by tradition because there were no Republicans around; a hero of Battery D; convenient for Tom Pendergast's machine; a county politician in Washington Township, south of Tom's town, Kansas City; friendly with every businessman, known to every barber; Lion, Eagle, Moose and Elk; member of the Legion, the VFW, the Regular Veterans Association, the order of Ahepa, the Society for the Preservation of Barbershop Singing, 33rd Degree Mason—President Truman, as Frank Gervasi says, is the square root of America.




The big cities over which Roosevelt presided are still big cities to him; the faraway lands which lay at Roosevelt's fingertips are still far away. His liberal friends distrust New York liberals; his Jewish friends distrust New York Jews. He is more at home in a clubhouse than in a union hall; happier playing poker than debating with intellectuals. He swears freely in the presence of men and never before ladies. Without eloquence or command of speech, he lights fires among crowds who sense that Roosevelt was for them and that Truman is of them. He knows because he shares the hopes and fears of millions of Americans who half-admire, half-resent those who shove them around.

He doesn't *sympathize* with the millions of Americans who get shoved around; he *participates* in their experiences because he has been shoved around. Roosevelt's strength was his compassion; Truman's strength is his experience.

He knows the need for federal aid to education because he and his mother scraped dimes together to buy his schoolbooks. He wants stronger civil-rights statutes because he has lived under the Klan and seen blood shed in race riots. He knows what inflation means because boom and bust after the last war broke Truman and Jacobson, men's outfitters of 12th Street in Kansas City. Frank Gervasi points out that it took Truman twenty years to pay off debts he had voluntarily assumed and that just three years before he became President of a $250-billion-a-year nation, Truman paid off the last remaining debt on his haberdashery store.

Yet many men, exploited all their lives, have entered politics to serve the exploiters.

**Truman in politics** was always an organization man. He built a good record in the Senate because he was part of a good organization. Suddenly he found himself head of the organization. If any-

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thing, his task was harder than Roosevelt's. As President, Roosevelt lifted the performance of our government, and the awareness of our people, to the level of America's new tasks. Yet, save for a few months between Munich and Dunkirk, the liberal movement which flowed through him knew where it was going. In Truman's term, the compulsion to one world, and the breaking into two worlds, left liberals uncertain of their ends, and set as tasks of leadership the reëvaluation of a great world movement and the determination of objectives as well as tactics and strategy.

Reaction was in the ascendant and anticipated its assumption of full power. Roosevelt at such a time might have gone down with all flags flying. Truman, governed by innate caution and a sense of inadequacy, followed liberal principles and conservative policies. Pulling back his lines, he found himself, in 1947 and 1948, little better than a constitutional monarch with responsibility and no authority and with not much time to prepare himself and to grow.

**Of course Truman** has grown in administrative ability and in understanding, although his capacity for growth is not unusual. He lacked at first a judicial approach in the determination of the problems that mounted on his desk. He was quickly convinced by a persuasive argument; he made snap decisions; he often burned his fingers. He learned to listen; to bring both sides into any conference; to end by saying, "I want time to think this over," and to assign his staff to investigate quietly before making up his mind.

He lacked also a comprehensive approach to government. From Roosevelt he inherited a coalition. So from his first day he was involved in a continuing conflict between liberals and conservatives within the Administration. Generally the liberals were outnumbered. They held the staff posts and lost the command posts. They prepared the speeches and programs; the conservatives made the appointments and ran the government. Truman relied on his old friends, who were mostly untrained, although the federal government demanded more specialized ability than any industry. Consequently the government gained a reputation not only for conservatism, but for incompetence and mediocrity. In the major postwar problems of reconversion, inflation, labor relations and peace, the government shared much of the responsibility for mismanagement and failure.

So Truman's ties to labor, and to his own party leaders, weakened until, early in 1948, the Democratic Left split three ways: some groups supporting Truman for renomination; some seeking to build a new party on the prewar, people's-front pattern; some, including the *New Republic*, searching for a new standard bearer for the Democratic Party. All three groups joined in one conviction; that Truman could not win.

**Truman in 1948** reached a decisive turning point. His own staff was largely liberal. And, beset by Dixiecrats, Progressives and rebellious Democrats, he debated their wisdom. It was clear to him that he would run, and that the 80th Congress would be his campaign target. But a major battle was fought and won before he decided to make his fight also on an affirmative liberal program. With that decision made, the Democratic platform, except for details in the civil-rights plank, was Truman's platform.

Militant liberalism won for Truman and so reëstablished itself in government. The challenging programs outlined in the State of the Union message, the budget and the Economic Report are not the unwitting commitments of a man without comprehension of their significance or of the opposition they will arouse. When he read to the cabinet paragraph eight of the anti-inflation program of the State of the Union message, all hell broke loose. The conservatives fought first to eliminate the entire paragraph, which referred to expansion of capacity, then to omit the reference to the steel industry. Truman yielded momentarily on the second point, reconsidered, and put the reference back in.

Truman's new program has been well-prepared. Roosevelt, long on self-confidence, was weak in staff work. Truman has discovered that when he and his staff differ, his advisers are often right. Consequently the staff work of the White House has never been better. Unfortunately, administration is less important than dramatization in enacting a reform program. Given the present program, Roosevelt would fire a star shell over Republican ranks to determine their outline, set off a few shots to fix his range, alert the people with a battle order, and with all the nation taking sides, charge in to grapple with the enemy. Truman, in a blunt and unimaginative way, will try to push his program through. Despite his years in Congress, his concept of leadership is to send a message to Capitol Hill and await the legislation.

Roosevelt knew the things he would not trade; ruthlessly he traded everything else, to get what he wanted. He ran Congress; his leaders resented taking orders, but they took them. Now the same men—Rayburn, McCormack and Barkley—will seek to run the nation. They may well conflict with the Administration. It will not be a conflict of liberalism and conservatism. But the Fair Deal may be shaped by what they think Congress will accept.

A new President takes office in the spirit of a honey-

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moon. Within six months, if he moves ahead, he makes so many enemies that the rest of his term may consist of compromises. The New Deal, despite Roosevelt's continuing vitality, had almost died three years after his first election. For Truman, the next six months are all important. If he engages at once in major battles his casualties will be costly. If he waits, his popular following may fall away and his opportunity be lost.

Some of his friends are now busy weaving a myth of Truman, the invincible leader, the second Lincoln. This seems to us to be dangerous and a little grotesque. He is a typical American whose strength is his averageness. His record has still to be made. It may be given to Truman to accomplish more than all but a handful of Presidents could accomplish. He still may fail.

We are sure that Truman, win or lose, will not fit into any of the niches of history which we may prepare for him. He will never really trust the New Dealers or the trade-union leaders, and they will never really understand him. The climate of intellectual restlessness and economic militancy in which they thrive will never completely blend with the air of small-town complacency in which Truman lives. Yet, if he accomplishes a significant part of his present objectives Truman will be remembered as one of the major figures in American liberalism. And, since he dislikes all labels, no one would recoil more from this thought than Harry S. Truman.

MICHAEL STRAIGHT

# THE WEEK

## GUILTY OF BEING BLACK

*ATLANTA (NR correspondent)*

Though it may be small consolation to the widow of the man who was murdered, the fight for a federal anti-lynching bill will be helped by the travesty of justice that took place last week in Lyons, Georgia. There, two white men charged with the lynch-murder of a Negro were set free after a "trial" which can only be described as a formality. We do not know, and are not saying, that the defendants were guilty; but certainly no one can be satisfied with what happened in the courtroom except the most bigoted supporters of "white supremacy."

The case, which was described in the *NR* of December 27, involved the murder of Robert Mallard, a prosperous Negro, accused of no crime except that of being well-to-do and perhaps not properly subservient to his poor-white neighbors. Driving home with his wife one night, he was halted by a gang of 20 men dressed in white robes. Mallard was shot and killed.

The local authorities clearly intended to do nothing about the murder. They were forced into action by the singlehanded publicity campaign of Ralph McGill, editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*, and two white men were were finally put on trial. One of them was acquitted by the jury after 26 minutes. The case against the other was then dropped.

The widow had positively identified the man, W. L. Howell, who was found not guilty. Two members of the jury, who had previously sworn to their impartiality, stepped down from the juror's box and testified, without any supporting facts, that they would not believe Mrs. Mallard because of her "bad reputation." For jurors to leave the box and testify in the course of a trial is legal in Georgia, and in many other places; but even in Georgia the use of such methods in a murder trial is almost unprecedented.

Howell, having been acquitted, cannot be tried on the same charge again. His companion, R. L. Clifton, might possibly be brought to trial in a federal court. There is a provision in the Federal Code which makes it a crime to go in disguise on the public highway to deprive another of his rights.

But no trial would be anything but a mockery if held in Lyons. It is clear that the real defendant in last week's affair was Robert Mallard. He was found guilty—guilty of being black.

## ONE PACKAGE OR TWO?

Organized labor's honeymoon with President Truman was marred a little when White House strategists turned thumbs down on AFL and CIO demands for a "two-package" operation on new labor legislation. The Administration is all out for speedy repeal of the hated Taft-Hartley Act, but the tactics adopted by the White House reveal both a lingering belief that "something" is needed to replace T-H's national-emergency section and a political fear that Truman would be badly hurt if the Administration is left with "no power" to deal with a hypothetical John L. Lewis coal strike next summer.

The "one-package" and "two-package" dispute was by no means an argument in a vacuum. If labor could get flat repeal of Taft-Hartley and reinstatement of the Wagner Act in a first package, it would then be in a strong bargaining position to argue against drastic amendments to the revived Wagner Act when time for debating the second package arrived. With everything wrapped up in one bill—including immediate amendments to the old Wagner Act—anti-union Representatives would be in a stronger bargaining position to fight for reinstatement of some T-H provisions in the measure labeled a "repealer."

Both Senator Elbert D. Thomas (Utah) and Representative John Lesinski (Mich.), New Dealing Democrats who head the Senate and House

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Labor Committees, took White House marching orders for the one-package deal. AFL and CIO spokesmen violently protested in private conferences but made no headway, and signs multiplied that a major fight would break, principally in the Senate, when the repealer reaches the floor.

Republican strategy is to go back to the original Taft bill reported by the Senate Labor Committee in 1947—a bill later rewritten into the Taft-Hartley Act in Senate-House conference committee—and fight for substantial sections of that measure as amendments to a revived Wagner Act. The Administration's idea is to repeal Taft-Hartley, pass the Wagner Act as a new law and at the same time add provisions recommended by Truman both in 1947 and 1949—a continued ban on jurisdictional strikes, "unjustifiable" secondary boycotts, and strikes over interpretation of existing contracts. In addition, the White House still wants that undefined "something" to deal with national-emergency disputes.

From the standpoint of practical politics, the White House appeared to be right in adopting the one-package approach. A spokesman said frankly that Truman "didn't have a prayer" of getting the votes on Capitol Hill for simple Taft-Hartley repeal. Furthermore, unless all Democrats stood rigidly together in the Senate to reject every proposal except those made by Truman, Senate rules would allow interminable debate as Republicans offered amendment after amendment to the Administration bill, and the whole subject would be opened for discussion regardless of Truman's desires.

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### THE LAW COMES TO MOBILE

In Dixiecrat Alabama white supremacists were confounded in one of their schemes to restrict Negro voting when a three-judge federal court held unconstitutional the Boswell amendment. This amendment required registrants for voting to be able to "understand and explain" the US Constitution. The court held that it "clearly appears that this amendment was intended to be, and is being, used for the purpose of discrimination against applicants for the franchise on the basis of race or color."

The Mobile County Board of Registrars was permanently enjoined from enforcing the amendment "in determining the qualification of any citizen who applies for registration as an elector." Reviewing the campaign for the amendment in 1946, the court said that the State Democratic Executive Committee spent its funds in an endeavor to make the Democratic Party in Alabama the "white man's party." Since the Mobile County Board of Registrars has been in office, more than 2,800 white persons have been registered and only 104 Negroes.

## NEW FACES IN CONGRESS

IF UTAH'S first woman Representative, Judge Reva Beck Bosone, attacks inflation, housing and other administration issues with as much vigor as she displayed as a judge in trying to prevent traffic deaths and alcoholism, she will create plenty of news. During her first two weeks in Washington, Mrs. Bosone studied the House committees and listened to veteran Representatives introduce bills and make the customary one-minute speeches. (She said she would save her "maiden" address for a time "when I have something important to contribute.") Her first committee choice is Public Lands, since reclamation, flood control and soil conservation are important to the West. "Remember," she says, "we were once a desert and we don't want to go back to it."

Labeled neither Left nor Right, Mrs. Bosone approaches Washington without a record by which her impact on the national or world scene might be gauged. Utah Democrats, who know her as a social reformer on local matters, found her a refreshing change from the amiable and somewhat inept Republican candidate, William A. Dawson. She trounced him, 92,731 to 68,574.

Women of Utah have every reason to champion Representative Bosone. She was the first member of her sex to be elected to the state legislature (1933), the first to head a major committee there, the first to become floor leader, and the first Utah woman to be elected to a judgeship. When she became city court judge, the dingy courtroom became a rapid-fire news center. Cases were handled informally (defendants were often addressed by their first names). Wayward girls were sent to psychiatrists and alcoholics to physicians; employers were asked to give petty culprits another chance; traffic violators were read the riot act and fined heavily.

On the surface, Reva Beck Bosone might be called a prime example of that American phenomenon, the "reformer." She is strikingly typical of all that the press, radio and motion pictures have led the public to expect in the way of a career woman. She gives the impression of a strong-minded member of the weaker sex, needing only a cause to swing into action. In line with the homespun Hollywood theme she has, while handling her public affairs, managed to rear a strikingly pretty 18-year-old daughter—as well as doing a fair share of home canning and preserving for her household.

But "reformer" though she is, Representative Bosone has an absolutely open mind on any of a dozen issues, readily says so and plans to study each one as it comes up. She will not introduce any legislation in the near future but will carefully follow measures to promote peace and assure good housing and control of inflation. "Passage of federal laws outlawing the poll tax, lynching and guaranteeing fair employment practices," she says, "are 'musts'."

It can be expected that she will weigh any legislation she is called upon to consider by its effect on the voters who sent her to Congress—an old-fashioned virtue not without merit today.

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# OUTSIDE AMERICA

**The Israeli war** has begun to take on aspects disquietingly reminiscent of a couple of other wars—the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 that began as a little local affair and turned into the dress rehearsal for the Second World War; and the Balkan War of 1912 that at the time seemed nothing more than another routine squabble in Europe's powder keg but became the curtain raiser for the first modern war involving the whole world.

By the military standards of either of the world wars, the shooting war in the Negev is pretty small stuff. But so was the shooting along the Ebro.

And the resemblance between the general diplomatic-cum-military Israel situation in the late 1940's and the one in Spain in the late 1930's isn't the sort to make mothers with sons in their late teens sleep peacefully. The Big Powers talk a glib jargon of peace, and the UN provides loudspeakers to magnify their official voices. The men in striped pants want only to localize the conflicts, then to restore peace with justice. They're 99 and 44/100 percent pure in their neutrality, and they shudder publicly at the very thought of intervening in any way in the shooting. Memories of Spain come back when you read in a London dispatch to the New York *Times:*

> The story from Tel Aviv asserting that Britain has sent £50 million worth of arms to Egypt in the last few months is denied in most emphatic and resentful terms here. An official source close to the Prime Minister described the story as "an outrageous lie." . . . British officials have made an important point for many months that Britain has strictly observed the embargo on arms to all parties in the Palestine dispute. . . . On the other hand, the British Government has issued statements charging a flow of arms from Czechoslovakia to Israel. . . .

This is the official story, and not very different from the one that came a dozen years ago from Rome, Berlin and Moscow. But guns in Israel tell another story—and these guns don't grow out of the Negev desert; they come from manufacturers, arsenals, dumps in the Big Powers or from little nations which the Big Powers could argue out of their death-dealing trade if they really had the mind to. While the lingo of peace is spreading over the front pages of the world's newspapers its tissue of lies, half-truths and hypocritical trick distortions of mouths ignoring what hands did, here is what a correspondent of London's reputable *New Statesman and Nation* actually found in Israel:

> There were people ready to sell to all-comers, and some who were more discriminate. The Czech Skoda rifle found its way to both sides; Italian planes reached the Egyptians; jeeps arrived in Iraq; two ships with supplies for the Arab Legion arrived in Akaba, and at dark of one night a British ship with an Egyptian crew unloaded American and British equipment in Tel Aviv. . . . The Egyptians have Fiat fighters which they did not have a month ago; the Jews have Fortresses and Messerschmitts. The truth is that in one way or another the arming of both sides has never ceased from the moment the fight started. The existence of the truce has made supply more difficult and expensive, but it has not stopped it.

Nor has the official pro-peace sweetness-and-light stopped another ugly traffic; on the contrary, the fine talk in the UN turns out to have been little more than a smoke screen behind which some of the Big Powers have been bargaining in the black market of political intrigue. In this quarter there's an even more frightening resemblance between the past and the present; between two once-powerful but declining empires; between two men unable or unwilling to face the facts of history—between Leopold von Berchtold, Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary's Franz Joseph in the Vienna of 1912, playing with matches in the Balkan powder keg; and Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary of His Britannic Majesty in London of 1949, playing a not less dangerous game in the highly inflammable Middle East. In both cases, little nationalisms are whipped up, excited against one another by the ancient method of divide-and-conquer; and in both the shadow of the great Slavic bear is invoked to excuse and justify the game of *Machtpolitik.*

No one with even a rudimentary awareness of history contests Britain's interest in the Middle East. The Foreign Office has had a very special interest in the affairs of Arabia Deserta since Colonel Lawrence translated Doughty's difficult prose into the romantic language of high adventure (and, incidentally, the gibberish of power politics). Moreover, for centuries before the London-fomented revolt in the Arabian desert, the British had been deeply involved in an area athwart the lifeline of empire. Great shadows of the British Raj—Clive and Hastings, Kitchener and Gordon, Kipling and Rhodes—presided over Britain's god-fathering of Emir Feisal's kingly destiny, over the creation (by unilateral decision) of the

state of Transjordan, then finally over the making of the Arab League.

But there have been blood, tears and sweat since Lawrence's hooded horsemen rode over the sands of the desert; the Grand Mufti offered the hand of the Arab world to a man named Adolf Hitler; and after General Allenby at Jerusalem, there were General Percival at Singapore and many other persons and places the British would like (quite understandably) to forget. Unfortunately, in forgetting what needs to be forgotten, the British (or some of them) haven't remembered what needs to be remembered. They don't admit that the empire isn't what it once was; far more

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important for the mothers throughout the world of youths in their teens, they fail to see as they renew their old, old game of intrigue that they're playing not merely with fire but with atom bombs; they're risking not only their own shopworn imperial destiny but the whole world's future.

Last week, there were still more resemblances to the old days when "incidents" on obscure frontiers could be beclouded and made into justifications for the ancient imperialist game. RAF planes were shot down by the Israelis on the Negev border. Official British voices rose in righteous indignation, saying the planes had been over Egypt and ordering more British men and armor to the Middle East. But an unbriefed RAF pilot admitted he had been over the Negev. The British voices sang a new tune: the planes had been over the area on a reconnaissance flight undertaken after talks with the US. But this didn't stick either: President Truman said there wasn't a word of truth in it. The *New Statesman* gave a simpler version of what the RAF planes had been up to:

> It is clear that the Egyptian invasion of Israel is ending in a fiasco. Though it was from the first a flagrant act of aggression, the Egyptian Government is now seeking to stave off the penalties of defeat by seeking help from Britain under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. . . . By playing up the threat to Egypt's own security and especially the Suez Canal, the Egyptians have once more given Bevin an opportunity to champion the Arab cause. . . . Nothing could better illustrate the shameful futility of British policy in the Middle East. . . . The alleged threat to Suez is not serious . . . but it is good enough as a pretext for further British pressure upon Israel.

The most serious danger in this pressure—the one that brings up specters of the two other "little, local" wars—isn't the diplomatic doubletalk; it isn't the supply of arms to the combatants, nor even the British show of the flag in the Eastern Mediterranean—risky as all these may be in a loose-triggered situation. It is that the British, as a means of throttling the Israeli nationalism which they abhor, are whipping up various kinds of Arab nationalism that in the long run may be a great deal more difficult to control.

Until recently, the Foreign Office appeared to be using a chosen-instrument policy. Alternately, it backed Transjordan's King Abdullah and his Legion under Glubb Pasha, Egypt's King Farouk, the Arab League and the various other contenders for primary satelliteship in the Middle East. Now the intrigue seems to have gone much farther: the British are simultaneously backing a number of bidders for power; indeed, it begins to look very much as if the FO were backing anybody who could cause trouble and hence prevent the Israelis from settling down to enjoy the fruits of their military victory.

For example, Nuri Pasha as-Said has suddenly and mysteriously come to power as prime minister in Iraq. The New York *Times* provides an explanation:

> Nuri Pasha secretly visited King Abdullah before accepting the premiership, which means an agreement with Transjordan. Nuri Pasha in the past has stood for friendship with Britain, and has supported the idea of a greater Syria, taking in Syria, Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine, with a member of the Hashemite family as king. With relations between Britain and Israel deteriorating, Nuri Pasha is seen here [in Beirut] as a possible keystone of a defense system backed by Britain that would protect Arab territory. . . .

But it's in Egypt that the really labyrinthine ramifications of the new wave of all-out imperialistic intrigue are suggested. Some time ago Nokrashy Pasha abandoned the nationalist WAFD Party and went over to the party of the "King's friends." He became premier and, in that role, presumably was "the King's man." Then he banned the Moslem Brotherhood, a fanatical Pan-Islamic organization. A couple of weeks ago he was murdered by a member of the Brotherhood, who was wearing a police uniform. To Western minds, the cause and effect was quite clear. But the *Christian Science Monitor* translates into the Middle Eastern political-intrigue language which the British appear to speak so fluently:

> In order to obtain popular support for his anti-WAFD policy, King Farouk and his advisers encouraged the activity of the Moslem Brotherhood. . . . Today, the Brotherhood has outgrown its royal sponsor and, according to an Egyptian Government spokesman, is "aiming at seizing power and at overthrowing the established order in the country." The leadership of the Brotherhood, it appears, has used the romantic and religious appeal of its program to set up a powerful mass organization which is increasingly following the Fascist pattern. . . .

★

**In the Belgrade** of Tito's Yugoslavia, the officials were more sympathetic than they had been in the days of the Obrenovics and the Karageorgovics: when the farmers cried Wolf, the Minister of Forests actually listened, and did something. The problem was the damage wolves were doing on the Delibatska Heath of Vojvodina. The Minister said no wolves were big or bad enough to defeat the affectionate interest the big and strong Tito state had in its good and loyal farmers. As a matter of fact, he had just the means of liquidating those undisciplined beasts—the Belgrade Hunters' Coöperative.

Special trains and trucks took 1,200 hunters from Belgrade to the rendezvous. Wireless was used to direct the operations. Unfortunately, however, the wolves must have been tipped off by one of those savage beasts in human guise—an enemy of the Tito state. *Borba*, the Communist Party's official newspaper, commented sadly:

> In spite of all the preparations, there was no discipline among the hunters, and when no wolves appeared, some of them, tired of waiting, fell to shooting rabbits—which is strictly forbidden, others to drinking and making a rumpus. The hunt thus quickly became disorganized.

But the Tito state wasn't to be denied. *Borba* called for the liquidation of the hunters. P.W.

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# CAN AMERICA PLAN WITHOUT PLANNING?

**by I. F. Stone**

THE ANNUAL Economic Report of the President, as prepared with his Council of Economic Advisers, continues to be exciting and exasperating. The report and the companion reports of the Council itself are exciting, for in these documents anyone with a sense of history may see a profoundly individualistic society groping its way toward some measure of central planning to give it the stability popular aspiration demands. The documents are exasperating in their super-caution, their consistent effort to solve economic problems by sermon, their pious exhortation to capitalists, farmers and trade unionists to exercise self-restraint.

The Council's circumspection has been defended as dictated by the necessities of preserving a new institution, with a high potential for initiating social change, during a period of congressional reaction. The argument, though persuasive in its political realism, only postpones the prickly question: Can American society plan without planning?

**This year's** Economic Report, the Council's Annual Economic Review appended to it, and the Council's own third annual report deserve careful reading. They disclose a condition of full employment maintained by artificial props, a society faced by the classic dilemmas which precipitate the ups and down of the business cycle, and a leadership still fearful of doing a Kinsey report on the facts of American economic life.

The continued postwar inflationary boom has given rise to a dangerously deceptive wave of self-congratulation, but the Council, instead of knocking fatuity on the head, indicates the truth *en passant* in discussing what happened to stop the sharp break in farm prices which occurred in the first quarter of 1948. "Under the impact of the stepped-up defense program, the authorization of the European Recovery Program, tax reduction and numerous wage increases," the Economic Review says, "prices began a new upward surge."

Neither the Council nor the President directly and clearly correlates this dependence of the boom on the cold war with the decline of purchasing power at home under the impact of price increases. The most vivid sentence in the President's Economic Report noted that "even with farm production and national income at their present high levels, many families lack adequate diets." The observation was made in connection with the reëmerging problem of farm surpluses; it throws a flash of light on the lag in purchasing power which has already begun to transform the boom into a buyer's market.

The traditional disparities of capitalist society are evident in the Council's Economic Review. Prices of manufactured goods went up "in general more than the increase in costs, including wages, during the year." This led to "a new peak record in the dollar volume of profits." The corollary was a decline in the share of the national income going to consumers. "From the longer run aspect," the Economic Review says of the nation's economic budget for 1948, "the most important item is the reduction in the role consumption has recently played in the economy relative to business investment and government expenditures."

The President's Report to Congress put it more alarmingly, "The proportion of consumer expenditures . . . has never been lower in any peacetime year for which statistics are available." The President went on to say that this was not "an immediate problem" so long as the sum of "government expenditures, business expenditures and net foreign investment is still rising." This means that the relative decline of consumer purchasing power is not an immediate problem so long as the cold war continues, for that is the main source today of "government expenditures" and "net foreign investment."

In classical economic theory, profits are supposed to be high enough to attract capital. In the postwar inflationary boom, profits have been so high as largely to free industry from dependence on the capital market. Expenditures on new plant and equipment rose $2 billion in 1948 to a new all-time high. Also at a new high was the proportion of this new capital obtained from undistributed profits. These provided 65 percent of the funds utilized for expansion in 1948 as compared with 53 percent the year before. A 15-percent increase in corporate profits after taxes and a further lowering of divided payments to 36 percent of profits made this "internal" financing possible.

In thus freeing industry further from dependence on the money market, abnormal profit margins also freed industry from dependence on those automatic self-regulatory market mechanisms to which the Council still looks for aid in stabilizing business. Also, this huge program of expansion seems to be badly coördinated and may end in making more severe the stresses caused by bottlenecks.

**The Economic Review** hints that expansion in manufacturing generally may have reached a rate unnecessary for "normal growth" but notes that in at least two key areas, electric power and steel furnace capacity, expansion has lagged badly behind the rest of industry. This lag, however, is not accidental. It reflects the monopoly factors in both industries, and the higher profits and greater investment security to be obtained thereby.

What all this adds up to is the inadequacy of dependence on the profit motive. This needs to be said explicitly if public opinion is to be educated to the point where it will become politically possible to supplement its deficiencies.

Perhaps the most striking and familiar example is housing; nothing

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more vividly illustrates how spasmodic, anarchic, shortsighted and unimaginative the response of profit motivations to a basic market problem can be. The building industry has skimmed the cream of the demand for high-priced homes, and has taken advantage of "very high public guarantees to private investors," a delicate way of referring to the costly gerry-built shacks sold to so many veterans. About 80 percent of the homes being built are for sale, though most of the demand is for rent. "And now," the Economic Review says, "the decline in starts has set in, before achieving even for one year a rate of new construction as high as the estimated annual need for ten years."

**Here the facts** are so inescapable and experience so widespread that the President can ask for a larger program of low-cost housing. Whether he can overcome the building lobby remains to be seen. But on the broader question of the complete overhauling needed by this backward, obsolescent and greedy industry, the President and his advisers still seem to rely on exhortation. "At this time of national stocktaking," the President said, "I urge all elements of the building industry substantially to lower costs so that housing production may reach new record levels."

The President is as wistful as a preacher giving a boys' club a stereopticon-slide lecture on the rewards of virtue and the wages of sin. The approach to housing is the same futile call to self-restraint the Economic Council reports have preached intermittently for two years in lieu of price control. "The present decline in housing," the Annual Economic Report continues, "points up the danger that inflated building costs can bring down upon the industry."

Real-estate men know this better than anyone else; it is the nature of private enterprise to put immediate individual profits ahead of long-range considerations of public policy. "If housing costs are lowered and the consumer gets better value," the economic sermonizing continues, "builders will be able to continue to build in volume and the building industry need not fear a continued downward trend." The real-estate men still prefer getting theirs when they can.

Not since Herbert Hoover's day have we seen as persistent and dewy-eyed an attachment to the hope that economic life may be regulated by exhortation. Thus, in the face of its own basic figures, the Economic Council, in the manner of a patient mother admonishing a wayward small boy, can still dwell on the polite fiction that "businessmen know" the danger of pushing prices and profits too high and "know, too, that . . . prosperity is endangered . . . [by] attempting to meet a softening of demand through cutbacks in employment and production" instead of lowering prices to maintain demand. But this is exactly what Kaiser and Ford have begun to do in Detroit and what every other businessman will try to do if demand tapers off.

The President boldly and the Economic Council cautiously have come up with the idea of studying basic shortages with a view to financing expansion in bottleneck industries like steel, or—alternatively—building government-owned facilities in them. This is a first faint historic step forward to that mixed society under which it may be possible to preserve areas of private ownership and free enterprise within a framework which provides for some central planning and some government ownership. But if Truman succeeds in easing world tension and bringing the cold war to an end, he is likely to find himself with a problem more immediate than that of breaking bottlenecks in a full-employment economy. The problem will be to prevent a sudden slump in purchasing power at home.

**In the absence** of cold-war expenditures, "a substantially equivalent increase in total consumer income" will become urgent. The Council says this "will require improvements in the distribution of income not only to avoid areas of want in a land of plenty, but also to avoid higher saving than is necessary to permit the expansion of investment needed for stable growth." This is a roundabout way to say that if the worker-consumer is to have more, the capitalist-entrepreneur must be satisfied with less. How to achieve this? The Economic Council doesn't say. This is where our grandfathers came in. This is the heart of the problem of stabilizing American society.

Only a doctrinaire idiot, insensitive to the quirks of history, would say solution was impossible. The chief obstacles lie not in arithmetic but in psychology, in the habits and preconceptions of men rather than in the ebb and flow of a market already "planned" in anarchistic bits and pieces. The first step toward solution lies in jettisoning verbal phobias and idolatries, the fear of "socialism," the worship of "free enterprise."

**The freedom** of the market today is hedged about by all kinds of haphazardly planned private and public controls: support legislation determines farm prices, unionization holds up wages, much of industry does business on the basis of administratively fixed prices, the interest rate—most sensitive of all capitalist thermostats—is fixed of necessity by the Treasury.

To go from this toward some measures of central over-all planning, to coordinate these private and semi-public "plans" in one big federal one, would be but a step. Without that step we cannot prevent the alternations of boom-and-bust. Neither regulation nor anti-trust laws nor social-security payments nor the manipulation of the discount rate nor compensatory spending has proved equal to this task in the past. Horrid as is the word "plan" in a society which still has frontier overtones, somebody must have the courage to use it again and to preach it again if we are to succeed.

The Council of Economic Advisers will have to take on that politically arduous task soon if public opinion is not to face a new depression badly prepared to understand and support the measures required to cope with it.

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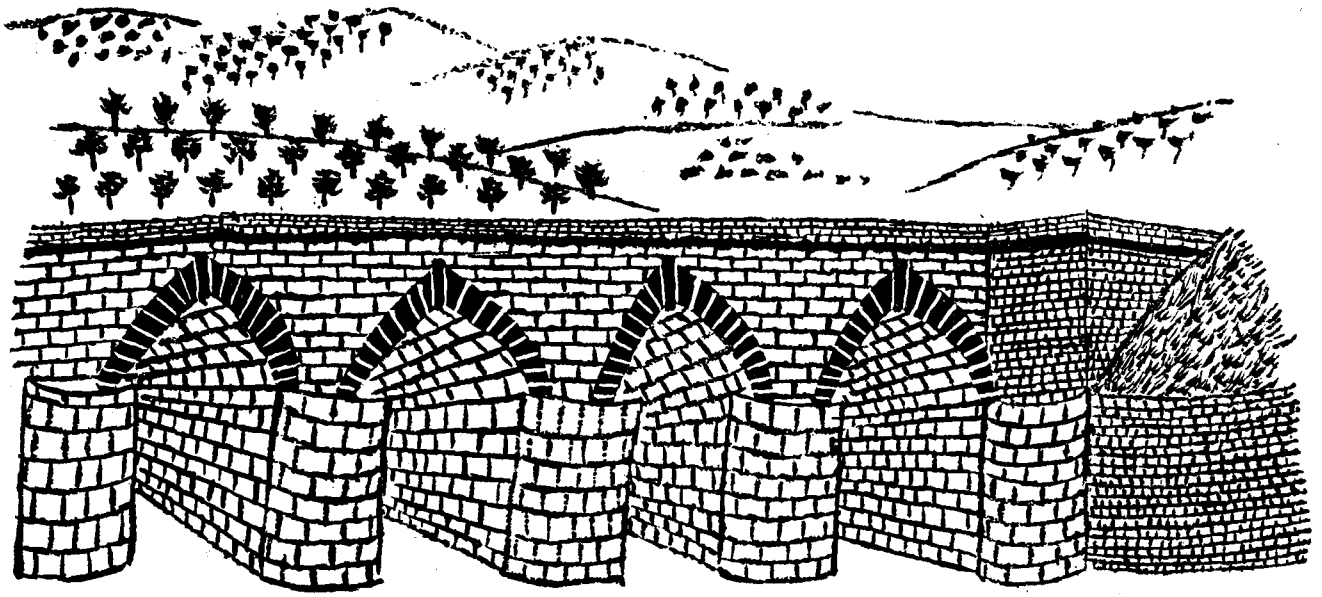

# THE POLITICS OF THE WORKERS IN ITALY

**by Gino Bardi**

ROME

TEN MILLION WORKERS are "gainfully" employed in Italian industry and agriculture, according to a recent statement by the Minister of Labor. Of these, approximately seven million are organized in trade-union federations affiliated to the powerful Confederazione Generale dei Lavoratori Italiani (CGIL), whose general secretary, Giuseppe Di Vittorio, is an important member of the Politburo of the Italian Communist Party.

The unquestionable predominance of Communist influence in Italy's trade-union movement remains a puzzling phenomenon to observers familiar primarily with the labor movement in Britain and the United States. At the Florence Congress of the CGIL held last June, the Communists received 60 percent of the votes. Their political allies, the Nenni Socialists, received 22 percent. So long as their political alliance endures, Communists and Socialists, controlling 82 percent of the organized labor movement, are capable of throwing their weight around the Italian political scene despite the anti-Communist government now in power.

The strength of the anti-Communist forces in the CGIL registered at the Florence Congress was limited to the Christian Democrats, with 13 percent of the votes; the Republican Party of Randolfo Pacciardi, with two percent; and the Saragat Socialists, with two percent. A sprinkling of anarchists (who, however, support the Communists on most problems) and independents received the remaining one percent.

Almost two million of the CGIL's seven million members are organized in the Federation of Farm Workers and Sharecroppers. In the pre-Fascist days of Don Luigi Sturzo and the Popular Party (forerunner of the present Christian Democratic Party), this category of workers, as well as the peasant movement in general, was practically monopolized by the "white" Christian trade-union center. The last congress of the Federation of Farm Workers gave 65 percent of the votes to the Communists, 26 percent to the Nenni Socialists (totaling 91 percent), only six percent to the Christian Democrats and less than one percent to the Saragat Socialists.

The picture these figures present poses the question: How have the Communists succeeded in maintaining their influence over the main body of Italian organized labor while political trends in the country as a whole are apparently increasingly anti-Communist?

Before attempting to answer this question, it might be well to premise that 20 years of anti-Communist propaganda during the Fascist regime made deeper inroads into the middle class (main base of Fascism yesterday and main base of the Christian Democratic government today) than it did among the working class.

The main factors contributing to Communist success in the trade-unions are: (1) the objective economic situation; (2) experienced trade-union leaders; (3) the presence of an underground Communist organization in Italy during the Fascist regime which maintained some degree of contact with the workers.

**The Italian** economic situation unfolds a scene of mass pauperism and destitution on the one hand, and on the other the most shameful and brassy impudence of uncontrolled wealth. Conservative estimates place Italy's army of unemployed in industry and agriculture at approximately 2.3 million, most of whom receive no unemployment relief. One and a half million pensioned workers receive an average of 6,000 lire (approximately $9) monthly—not enough to provide a family of five with simple subsist-

*This is the first of two articles on the political nature of organized labor in Italy. The author is an American journalist working in that country.*

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ence for one week. The rate of suicide among the pensioned is almost as high as among the unemployed.

The minimum requirement for bare subsistence for a family of five (and Italian families are usually much larger) is 52,000 lire monthly (less than $95). After thorough study, this was the estimate of minimum need published by *L'Umanitá* (June 21, 1947), official organ of the Saragat Socialists. Since then, more than a year has passed: living costs have shot up while wages have not risen proportionately. By government decree, increases were ordered more than once in the price of bread, spaghetti, tobacco, gas, electricity and transportation. The wages of the better-paid industrial workers in Turin and Milan average between 27,000 to 30,000 lire monthly. The average pay of a railroad worker for a 68-hour week is 35,000 lire a month. The usual salary of a clerk falls between 20,000 to 25,000 lire.

Turin is commonly referred to as the most modern and "civilized" Italian city. A study made in 1942 disclosed that 99 percent of workers' homes were without bathrooms, 96 percent without heat, 22 percent without gas, 13 percent without toilets, 2 percent without drinking water. There have been no appreciable improvements since, despite the fact that 20 percent of workers' homes were destroyed by wartime bombing.

In the countryside of northern Italy, particularly Emilia, Tuscany and Umbria, conditions among the farm workers have become somewhat human; but southern Italy—Sicily and Sardinia—presents a picture of pauperism and feudal backwardness that beggars description. In the Puglia and Lucania (population three million) 150,000 farm workers alone are unemployed. "Employed" farm workers get only between 150 and 200 days' work a year, and earn an average 8,000 lire monthly. Families usually have five or more children. Most of them — illiterate or semi-literate — go to work before they are 14 years old. The staple diet is bread—and not enough of it. In Lucania, most farm workers and their families live in caves carved out of rock. Tuberculosis is rampant. Ninety out of every thousand babies die during their first year.

Further aggravating the general economic situation is the government's fiscal policy, which hits the little man heavily and the rich lightly, if at all. Seventy percent of the state's revenue is provided by indirect taxes, mostly on mass-consumption goods. Direct taxes on income and real estate provide but 12 percent. Only 2.5 percent of revenue comes from taxation of large incomes, excess profits, speculation and war profiteering. Tax evasion by the rich is the normal state of affairs, and the government apparently is either unable or unwilling to take the drastic steps necessary to compel the wealthy to shoulder their share of the burden of taxation in a modern society.

The recent scandal about Giulio Brusadelli, the "cotton king," inadvertently uncovered a tiny sector of the tax-evasion racket. This tycoon—an old friend of Mussolini and ardent supporter of Fascism yesterday, supporter of the Christian Democrats today—was paying an income tax of 498,157 lire annually, having declared his income to be two million lire. An investigation disclosed that he had assets valued at five billion lire, and had evaded payment of a capital tax of 250 million lire, an income tax of 210 million lire yearly, and a family tax of three million lire annually.

That the overwhelming majority of Italy's population is ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-housed, is universally admitted. *La Libertá*, organ of the left wing of the Christian Democrats led by Giovanni Gronchi, president of the House of Deputies, wrote on November 18, "Italy continues to remain a country where beside the most tragic misery is displayed the most shameless wealth." The Saragat Socialist newspaper, *L'Umanitá* (November 11), spoke of "the everyday story of this country where luxury and misery are neighbors." *La Voce Republicana,* organ of Pacciardi's Republican Party, said on August 31, "If you stop at any street corner, you will hear a great many people exclaim: *This can't go on!*" These are the opinions not only of the three main parties in the present government coalition, nor only of Communists and Socialists; they are the opinions of all honest Italian democrats.

Thus the Communist Party and its trade-union personnel in the CGIL are working in fertile soil. The Communists have presented to Italian workers the following program for economic betterment: land reform, industrial reform (beginning with the participation of labor in management in order to increase production), trade with all nations (particularly the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries), and a foreign policy directed toward peace.

**The three** minority political groups in the CGIL (Christian Democrats, Republicans and Saragat Socialists) have also gone on record in qualified support of this program, but their approval has been negated by the failure of the government to take any concrete steps to carry it out. When de Gasperi, for example, hedges over the granting of juridical recognition to workers' joint-management committees in industry (promised in Article 46 of the Constitution and in the election propaganda of the Christian Democrats), it is easy for the Communists to argue that the government parties are defending the interests of the industrialists. When the de Gas-

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peri government makes not even a timid beginning toward land reform (promised in Article 44 of the Constitution and by the government parties during the April election campaign), the Communists can convince Italy's millions of landless farm workers and small peasants that the government defends the interest of the landowners, the *latifondisti*.

**The government** and its supporting parties within the CGIL have staked their political future on the Marshall Plan. During the election campaign, the main point made in their appeal to the workers was that ERP would solve Italy's economic problems, would increase production and employment, and would bring Italy abundance, prosperity and peace.

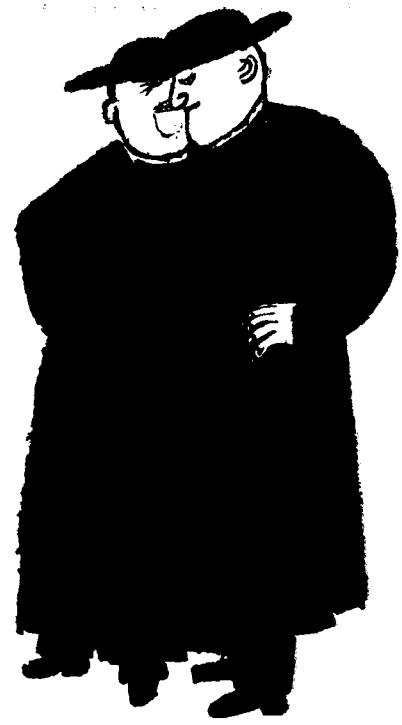
The Communists, on the other hand, told workers that the Marshall Plan meant the dismantling of Italian industry, the curtailment of industrial production, wholesale layoffs, the impossibility of expanding Italian markets in the Eastern European countries, American political control over Italy and the eventual insertion of the country in the "Western war bloc."

What has happened since the Christian Democratic election victory and the inauguration of ERP in Italy?

Emboldened by de Gasperi's victory, employers (apparently convinced that it was also *their* victory, as was sadly admitted recently by Christian Democratic leader Gronchi) started a wave of wholesale layoffs in industry. This created panic among the workers. FIAT, Breda Motors, Ansaldo Shipbuilding, Ilva and Terni Steel, Lancia, Alfa Romeo, Isotta-Fraschini and others said the layoffs were necessary to "weed out surplus workers" in order to streamline production and reduce costs. But the victims resisted. ECA came to the rescue—of the industrialists. James Zellerbach, chief of the ECA Mission in Italy, declared it was necessary to fire one out of every three workers in industry. The government's silence was interpreted as consent.

The Communist trade-union leaders were thus able to tell the workers that they had been right in predicting wholesale layoffs and increased unemployment. Under Communist leadership, the CGIL organized strikes. In most cases, the layoff notices were withdrawn. But the retreat was only temporary; the industrialists are now once more making an attempt to "slough off useless workers." It is a foregone conclusion that the CGIL will fight back, with the support of the workers.

On the other hand, the attitude of the governmental parties in the CGIL was expressed on July 13 in *L'Umanitá*: "Our economy cannot raise itself unless there is an immediate return to normality with the employment only of workers necessary to the effective



needs of an enterprise. There are in Italy today 300,000 workers who must be fired." And this, of course, was a "natural" for the Communists.

Whenever there is an announcement that a factory is being dismantled or a mine closed down, the Communists in the CGIL organize a strike or occupy outright the factory or mine. If this has no effect, a general strike is called in the entire city or the entire province until the employers agree to continue operation of the enterprise. These strikes are usually condemned as "political" by the pro-governmental parties.

The attitude of the government parties in the CGIL toward the dismantling of factories was also stated by *L'Umanitá*. In its October 31 issue, it wrote: "If we want to heal Italian economy, it is inevitable that we dismantle the parasitic enterprises, created first by the protectionistic policy of pre-Fascist governments and later by fascism during the long years of autarchy."

The Communists tell the workers that the dismantling of these plants (mostly metallurgical, machine, motor and shipbuilding) is part of a Marshall Plan objective to destroy these particular industries in Italy. On the other hand, the Communists charge

DRAWINGS BY BEN SHAHN

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that trade relations with the Soviet Union are being sabotaged to the detriment of Italian industry. Several weeks ago, Communist trade unionists asserted that the Russians had placed an order with two Italian shipbuilding firms (OTO of La Spezia and Ansaldo of Genoa) for the construction of two tankers and 20 tugboats, costing 23 billion lire, half the amount payable in dollars. The work would have kept the workers of both companies busy for a year. But government intervention put an end to negotiations between the Soviet Union and the two firms. And, according to the Communists, this intervention was inspired by a reminder from the ECA Mission that Article 2 of the European Recovery Act forbids the export to Eastern European countries of products made from US materials.

The position of the government parties' representatives in the CGIL is difficult. Workers are not easily convinced that the dismantling of plants and mass layoffs required "for the defense of national economy" are really, in the long run, "in the interest of the workers themselves." In practice, the trade-union leaders of the government parties have had to go along willy-nilly with the Communists in the strikes and agitation for fear of isolating themselves from the workers.

*The second of Gino Bardi's articles on Italian labor will appear in a forthcoming issue.*

# SOCIALIZED BARS CAN BE FUN

## *Britain's state-owned pubs are pleasant places where work is still held to be the curse of the drinking classes*

**by Vincent Brome**

*The British Labor Government has introduced a bill in Parliament providing state ownership and operation of the saloons to be erected in the new satellite towns now being planned for various parts of England.*

*The Tory Opposition has criticized the proposal sharply as being socialism at its worst. The government says, on the contrary, that it has no intention of applying the principle of state ownership to the liquor trade as a whole, but that the new policy is made necessary chiefly by an old law which forbids moving a liquor license across a county boundary.*

*In the debate in Parliament, both sides have relied heavily on the experience of the town of Carlisle, which has had government ownership of public houses for 30 years. The* New Republic *therefore asked Vincent Brome to visit Carlisle and report on the situation.*

*Brome is a London journalist and radio commentator whose chief interests are in the labor movement. He has written biographies of Clement Attlee, Aneurin Bevan and Jennie Lee.*

—THE EDITORS

WHEN I BEGAN my investigations into Britain's 56 state-owned bars in Carlisle, my friends were divided between satire and ribaldry. Since they flourish on both, the picture they drew was hardly surprising. . . . The bars, they said, would have all the functional coldness of modern banks, with cadaverous ghouls pushing drinks under a grille, and murmuring, at the slightest hint of a hiccup, "His Majesty hopes you will not get high. . . ."

Drinking and bureaucracy recoiled from each other as the Devil from holy water, and somewhere an inspector, disguised as a bartender, would ask me to fill in a blank under pain of alcoholic excommunication. Spontaneous gayety would be discouraged, voices raised in song frowned upon, "roll out the barrel" no longer admissible as a drinking principle. And —final horror—the ancient British slogan, "Safety First," so long and legitimately used to reduce accidents on British roads, would flower luxuriantly in every state bar, with a quite new twist—"Sobriety First." This was the way it would go, my friends said, and would I, anyway, order my beer in triplicate before the boys had a chance to get to work on me.

So when I stepped down into the public bar of the first state pub—bars are public houses in Britain—looked at the capacious blonde serving drinks, heard something oddly like a hiccup hanging on the air, and noticed the general absorption in the simple pleasures of drinking, I found it all very pleasant to ear and eye. The rafters of the pub were low, the bar a normal wooden bar, the brass rail ready to the feet and pints of beer coming up with the certainty of Atlantic rollers. There were the usual pheasant pictures on the wall, a glint of pewter, and an old-world ease about the place which had nothing to do with the clinical ways of modern civil servants. But indisputably this pub belonged to the British government, was administered by the Home Office—publican Herbert Morrison—employed managers and bartenders who were civil servants, and sold beer brewed in state-owned breweries.

Encouraged, I widened my scope, and took in several more—the Crown, the Malt Shovel, the Horse and Farrier, the Cumberland Wrestlers, the New Appletree—concentrating now on saloon as against public bars, and here came the real evidence of change. Public bars in Britain are the exclu-

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DRAWING BY CHARLES E. MARTIN

sive preserve of "working men" who may want to drink in shirt and trousers. Saloon bars cater for the middle classes who also work but would hate to be seen without a collar and tie. The division is not so sharp as it once was, but remains—even in the state-owned pubs. The saloon bar, in pubs like the Crown, is a place where they prefer not to serve you at the actual bar, a revolutionary move in British drinking life. Urbane waiters move among the tables taking orders and serving drinks. The chairs vary from green plush to leather, the tables are easy on the eye, the business side of the bar discreetly hidden behind grilled-oak panels, floor carpeted, many bell-pushes to hand. The people are spread generously around the paneled walls.

Since 1944, when an invasion of American troops started the rule, it has been customary for the management to wait until all the tables and chairs were full, and then to ask surplus customers whether they would mind using the next pub down the road. It is all done with great aplomb and politeness capable of disarming the most determined tough, and brawls are practically unknown. But once you are in, you can take your seat at a table merely to gape, without any compulsion to buy so much as a cup of coffee, and this is one of the seven wonders of British state pubs. It needs a daring spirit to ask for coffee in a normal English pub. Only perverts could so waste their palates, is a rough translation of the bartender's stare. But in the Crown, the Malt Shovel, the Wrestlers—tea, coffee, beer, whisky—it's all the same to them.

**The saloon bar** of the state pub can only be seen clearly beside its exact equivalent in the privately owned establishment. What does the average saloon bar look like at peak drinking hours in a "private" pub? It is a medium-sized room, with a few tables and chairs, thinly patronized, while a vociferous crowd mills around the actual bar itself in various stages of gloom, joviality and intoxication. It can become Hogarthian—men and women massed against one other vainly trying to balance drinks to their lips, while foaming tankards are passed overhead amid a Dante's inferno of smoke, talk and shrill calls reiterated with a doomlike hopelessness, for "Two 'alves and a gin and it." It is not only difficult to get a drink at the peak hour. It is quite an acrobatic feat to swallow it. Indisputably, the pleasure of being part of a tightpacked herd, where worries dissolve in a somewhat bogus camaraderie, has its points for a lot of people; and outside of peak hours things are altogether quieter, but if I were asked to choose between state and private saloon bar . . .

Does the state pub lose in spontaneous gayety what it gains in physical comfort? The answer may emerge later. For the moment, mine host of the state pub is no cadaverous ghoul with a puritanical mind born of too much churchgoing. He is a friendly person with more than a dash of that sunny disposition which may or may not spring from a sense of security, and shows no inclination to enlarge on the quality of his wares for the very simple reason that he gets no commission. No commission on drink, that is. The commission in this disinterested utopia comes from food and soft drinks.

In the rarified atmosphere where a customer makes his own choice without any cunning persuasions being brought to bear, the most that can happen to him is a gentle hint that perhaps a sandwich would be preferable to a bourbon, and even the siren

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voices of advertising have been stilled. State pubs carry no advertisements. The pictures which have taken their place on the walls show a tendency to serve the traditional idolatry which believes that hunting, shooting and fishing are still at the heart of English society; at worst they are modern variations on an old theme, and at best admit the claims of contemporary art. Pub managers get from $80 to $128 a month plus food and lodging plus commission, bartenders roughly $75 a month. Beer costs 27 cents a pint.

**But none of this** touches the most extraordinary feature of Carlisle's state-owned pubs. It is the origin of the experiment which is calculated to strike a chill in the least reactionary heart. For this was no "totalitarian step" taken by the iniquitous Socialist government led by "dictator Attlee." The present British government had nothing whatever to do with socializing Carlisle's pubs. It all began way back in 1915 when a munitions colossus was built outside the city and brought an invasion of Irishmen who painted the town red so persistently that convictions for drunkenness leaped from 248 to 953, and acid questions were asked of the Coalition Government led by the Liberals. It was not only drunkenness. Carlisle at closing time began to resemble the orgies of ancient Babylon.

First the Central Control Board for Liquor Control tried a few restrictions, and when they were carried away like straws before the mighty torrent of drink, Lord D'Abernon coined that masterly English phrase—"confessedly inadequate." Then the Board of Control brought stronger pressure to bear, again without result. In desperation, a bunch of old-world English gentlemen who would recoil from socialism as from poison blandly decided on a course of action which was practically revolutionary in their day and age. Under emergency powers, they bought up the district's entire liquor trade, which included five breweries and 321 licensed houses.

By sheer accident, people without any stake in socialism now became its finest exponents. The whole pattern of drinking was radically overhauled. The five breweries were concentrated into three; licensed houses reduced from 389 to 211; off-licenses from 105 to 13. But none of this stood beside the sweeping changes in the pubs themselves. When the enchantments of antiquity are overrun by certain brands of modern vice, they tend to lose their charm, and there was a leprous quality about some of these pubs which justified, in part, the short shrift they now received. With a haste almost unseemly in the pleasant atmosphere of Liberalism, inns which had seen half the history of the border country were demolished, and new ones built with every regard for the quirks of local tradition. Modern artists were summoned to paint the inn signs; landscape gardeners built gardens; bowling greens were laid; and what was once a drab desert of drinking slowly flowered into . . . But no, these were not to become the enchanted inns of Andersen's fairy tales, but they were very different from the fly-blown fabrications which once encouraged the carousals of every would-be sot in the town.

**Against the new** background, drunkenness began to subside. In 1916 convictions stood at 953, by 1917 they were down to 320 and in 1918 the figure fell sharply to 80. The first prime motive for taking over the pubs had been realized, but now the scheme had gathered a momentum of its own, and what began on moral grounds developed other characteristics. Compensation for the old pubs was fixed by negotiation between State Managers and private owners, and where they could not agree, by arbitration. It cost the British government $3 million. Within eleven years every penny had been repaid from profits and now the state has a flourishing business which must be worth at least $8 million and pays a handsome dividend every year. Part of the dividend is ploughed back into the business and part goes to the government.

The Malt Shovel, the Cumberland Wrestlers, the Black Lion, the Wheatsheaf—all the old names are there, enshrined, it is true, in quite different designs and still, for the moment, a little personal, like the pubs themselves. It takes a generation or two to give a British pub that depth of personality which excited the imagination of Dickens and Defoe, and as yet the cavaliers of collectivism have not made their voices heard in the state pubs for the simple reason that singing is forbidden. Darts, too—a very popular British pastime—are rare, and however smooth the service at scientifically placed tables, I shall regret losing the occasional throwbacks to my herd-self when I enjoyed being jostled in a madly crowded pub. But the chill of newness will wear off and the few austerities relax in time, unless the British genius for wearing down unnecessary regulations loses its persistence. Anyway, granted a grievance, you can now not only worry the local authorities by putting it in writing, you can take it to the Home Office, to the House of Commons, and even have questions asked in Parliament.

**One immense lie** remains to be nailed. It is not true that only beer from state breweries is sold. Three proprietary brands are available, and if a covey of Harveys has scared you into sipping soda water, you have the alternative in the state pub of tea or coffee, nicely laced with a dash of milk and a suspicion of sugar.

For the rest, there was the gentleman with the drooping chaps, warty chin and striped cap who murmured from the depths of his state-owned chair, "Work is the curse of the drinking classes." There was the stocky little Welshman: "Aye, mun . . . Me an' butty [friend] can get drunk in peace and quiet now. . . ." And the profane Scotsman: "State breweries. They'll be having state babies next. Licensing hours for reproduction—that's what it'll come to. . . ." But the majority of people in Carlisle say yes to their state pubs, and it appears that there are still civil servants who subscribe to Housman's dictum that "Malt does more than Milton can to justify God's ways to man. . . ."

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# AN OLD STUDENT OBJECTS

## *One who learned from Professor Laski rejects the theory that Russia can be tamed with kindness and concessions*

**by Richard L. Strout**

*In the* New Republic's *December 20 issue Harold J. Laski examined the re-election of President Truman and expressed his views on it and its meaning for Europe. His remarks inspired the following article by Richard L. Strout. Strout has been a* Christian Science Monitor *correspondent in Washington for the past 25 years. As such he covered the campaigns of Truman and Dewey.*

HAROLD J. LASKI was the best professor I ever had. He was stimulating and provocative. Everyone who passed through his classes was in some way changed. His writings are like his classroom lectures. If Laski is in good argumentative form he strikes off sparks, and oddly enough the red-hot metal is furnished by sympathizers as well as by opponents.

Reading his article, I find myself agreeing with the main thesis that Truman should do everything he can to stop a war with Russia (indeed, who wouldn't agree with that?). But I am moved to mutter along the way: "No"; "I object"; "I protest."

Laski dismisses the Communist fifth columns in the United States with the comment that they are a "nuisance." I imagine CIO president Phil Murray uses a stronger word.

Laski declares of the recent Truman victory that the President now "owes no political debts." I should say Truman owes big debts to farm and labor blocs, often in conflict.

Laski refers to Truman's "solid majority in both Houses." I don't think it is very solid and fear that time will show it.

Laski wants an American labor party started at once, modeled on the British party. He does not mention the absence in Britain of a big farm bloc, whose presence in the United States pretty well breaks down the parallelism between the two countries.

Laski says with finality that "it is accepted [among European liberals] that Wallace is in no sense a fellow traveler." I would not rake over unhappy memories. But certainly one reason for Wallace's failure was the conclusion of many liberals that he was, alas, welcoming Communist support.

These points are secondary to Laski's thesis that accommodation with Russia is being blocked by diplomatic formalism and red tape. He says we need more "innovation and courage." For "more than three years we have had routine and timidity," he declares.

This comment is directed primarily at the United States. In three years, however, President Truman has offered (1) a plan for international control of atomic energy which carried with it implications of world government—one of the most sweeping proposals, I believe, ever made; (2) a repeated offer to join a non-aggression pact with European nations in final defiance of America's traditional fear of entangling alliances; (3) the Marshall Plan; (4) the "Truman Doctrine" in Greece and Turkey. As to this fourth point, the Truman Doctrine may be good or bad, and Laski specifically attacks it, but at any rate it is not "timid" or "routine," and took boldness and courage to propose and get through Congress.

**Laski's article** is worth analyzing, I believe, because its implications and unconscious assumptions reveal so clearly the fears and distrust of the United States which are common today throughout Western Europe. There are two main fears: a gnawing apprehension that America is embarked on a course of economic imperialism, masked by the Marshall Plan, to stifle socialism and reëstablish capitalism. There is the second fear, amounting to nightmare, that American reactionary elements already have decided that war with Russia is inevitable and that Western Europe is the battleground.

These are the real postulates of Laski's article. They are points, too, which are constantly harped upon by Moscow. Their existence makes it harder for American liberals to get coöperation or understanding from European liberals. Their existence recently impelled Mr. Justice Douglas to urge that the State Department make more use of American trade-union representatives abroad to put before the fearful the real viewpoint of the United States.

**The difficulty** in meeting European suspicions is, of course, that they cannot be positively disproved. Again and again efforts are made not merely to block communism, but to sideswipe democratic socialism. These moves come from Americans who are not trying to defend democracy but want to preserve the status quo. They justify Europe's fears.

I do not deny these examples. But I feel that neither Laski nor the group for which he speaks properly estimates the strength of the anti-war sentiment in the United States or the strength and energy of the progressive elements. I think the Truman election supports this.

Laski wants Truman to intervene directly with Moscow to try to reduce international tension. This might be a good idea. But while advancing this proposal, Laski first uses Truman as a stick to beat most of the leaders of the Western democracies, and then breaks the stick—that is, he goes after Truman, too.

I am trying to be fair. I am sure Laski is doing his best, too. It is funny how hard it is to seem reasonable where Russia is concerned. Laski comes half way in characterizing the Communist leaders. They are "obstinate," "brutal," "foolish" and "secretive"; they are "irresponsible," and

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their acts "sometimes lie between the criminal and the contemptible." They can be "cruel and secretive, arrogant and obscurantist." That is a fair enough indictment, I am sure.

But in spite of all this Laski still feels there is some magic short cut to an accommodation with Russia. Others have vainly tried to find it at recent conferences and it is curious how many of them Laski criticizes—representatives of France, Britain, the United States, Australia and the rest. I suppose Laski includes Mrs. Roosevelt in his strictures, too; she has tried long and patiently to reach the secret short cut and has been denounced in Moscow for her pains.

Laski's views are often voiced in England by the lively gadfly, the *New Statesman and Nation*. I have felt that the steady coöperation between the United States and Great Britain is one of the most encouraging factors in the whole postwar world. But Laski now urges Truman, in effect, to repudiate Messrs. Bevin and Attlee at least on foreign policy.

**Postwar prejudices** and suspicions directed against the United States in many Western democracies are almost pathological. They deserve to be brought out into the open and exploited by progressives on both sides of the Atlantic. It seems to me that Laski, even though seeming to recognize the existence of a progressive United States, does not really do so, and that he also does less than justice to Truman. Laski notes, with accuracy, that this is the fifth successive election which the liberal side has won in the United States. But after using the election for his own purposes, he goes on to draw a picture of an almost childlike President.

Laski doesn't like the "Truman Doctrine" in Greece. Now here is a real issue. Many American progressives feel deep uneasiness about the Greek burden. Britain handed it over to the United States at the last moment, when she no longer had the strength to handle it herself. I do not defend the present Greek government and I believe steady pressure should be exerted to make it more democratic. But the brutal fact is that the alternative to our going into Greece was Russia's going in. I simply believe that the chances for Greek democracy are better in the long run under American protection than under Communist dictatorship. And I also believe we cannot ignore the military strategy involved in the cold war.

**Laski feels** that powerful American forces are consciously working for war with Russia. I just don't think this is so. I must bear evidence that in moving about Washington as a newspaperman I have never yet heard anybody express the idea that war with Russia is "inevitable," though there is a carking fear that it may turn out that way if Russia continues her present course. Joseph Lash's series of articles on Russia in this magazine and the analysis of Stalin's writings in the current *Foreign Affairs Quarterly* indicate, alas, that the "inevitability" of war is an accepted Soviet dogma.

I regret the note of condescension that has crept into Laski's voice because I think it limits his very valuable ability to persuade. Here again it is typical of much foreign writing about the United States. It is due, perhaps, to a postwar inferiority complex. Laski informs Americans, "We in Great Britain really cannot risk the failure of all of our plans for recovery in order to spend on rearmament what we ought to spend on houses, and schools, and modernized equipment in factories." There is a certain patronizing air in this which is out of touch with reality, I am afraid; Britain will probably have to keep on spending money for armaments (as well as for reconstruction projects) just as will the United States.

At another point Laski says, "We in Europe seem to descry many millions [in America] who thought, and think, that we did not fight the Second World War as a preparation for the Third."

This may be an oratorical gesture, but the implication is that other millions in the United States are looking forward expectantly to a Third World War, an idea that is pretty silly. Laski's words have the trick of going beyond what he probably means.

The two viewpoints are these:

Laski takes the view that, in spite of all rebuffs, Russia still can be conciliated into peaceful behavior by greater kindness and concessions.

The American and British governments, on the other hand, have reached the view reluctantly that the time has come for a policy of firmness and containment, and that long-run chances of peace are greater by so doing than in yielding to Russia any longer.

**It is a concomitant** of Laski's view that a good many American supporters of the opposing side are war-minded. He also tends to emphasize the mistakes of the Western democracies (particularly of the United States) and to minimize Communist aggression. It is not Moscow that is the insuperable barrier to understanding, in Laski's view, but what he calls at one place the diplomats' "dreary struggle for prestige." The present deadlock, as he sees it, is not merely due to basic differences but to "the red tape, the suspicions, the fears, the protocol, the doubts, the hatreds" of formal negotiators. Diplomats from the Western countries, he says, have failed to "explore the minds of the Russians."

I do not share Laski's hope for a quick short cut to agreement with Moscow, though I should not object if President Truman decided to have another go at it. I think Laski underestimates the difficulties imposed by the Russians. I think, also, he gravely underestimates the progressive sentiment in the United States and the liberalism in international affairs which can be counted on here.

Reading Laski again, I am amazed that I can disagree with so many points of his article while wholeheartedly accepting all his main desires and basic purposes. I guess really it comes down to one thing: I have more confidence in the United States than Laski has; less confidence, I am afraid, in Soviet Russia.

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# LEFT OF CENTER

WITH TWELVE of its national leaders indicted it would seem reasonable for the Communist Party to work for support from other leftist forces in the United States. Yet the CP seems bent on self-imposed isolation. Although talk of a pending turn-to-the-right continues in party circles, spurred by the recent pamphlet of "Americus," the political pronouncements of the Communists become more and more unrealistic.

The President's State of the Union message was characterized by the *Daily Worker* in gigantic headlines: "TRUMAN ASKS WAGE FREEZE, MILITARY TRAINING, MORE COLD WAR. EVADES PLEDGES, WALLACE DECLARES."

The reform of the House Rules Committee to speed the passage of liberal legislation was analyzed by Rob Hall, Washington reporter of the *DW*, this way: "Some have hailed it as an important democratic reform. Actually, the new procedure simply places more power in the hands of Truman Administration forces in the House of Representatives."

Defending "Marxist" biology, the *DW*'s Milton Howard slashes wildly at a host of liberals for daring to attack the new Soviet science: "Professor J. H. Muller has filled the pages of prominent cultural publications with tirades of abuse and falsification. . . . In the liberal New York *Star*, the columnist Albert Deutsch has disgraced himself by similar distortions, while the *New Republic* writer, Joseph Lash, has whipped up the same stuff into a warning of a new 'dark age' in the Soviet Union."

NAACP leadership, especially of the liberal and labor sector, gets a thorough going over from Abner W. Berry. He singles out for attack Walter Reuther, Philip Murray, A. Philip Randolph, Walter White, Alfred Baker Lewis, Gloster Currant, William Hastie.

**Losses in the** United Electrical Workers (CIO) continue to pile up at an astonishing rate for the Communist-dominated faction. In addition to losses reported in previous issues, the "left" faction lost control of the huge Pittsburgh Westinghouse by a margin of about eight to five. This local covers more than 15,000 members. Almost simultaneously, the "right" won the election at the Minneapolis Local 1140, the largest in Minnesota, including the strategic Honeywell plant. The election of a right-wing slate in this local to the Hennepin County CIO Council changes its formerly party-line complexion.

The Los Angeles Guild election resulted in victories for the candidates pledged to national Newspaper Guild leadership and national CIO policy. "Slim" Connelly, secretary-treasurer of the CIO Council, ran next to last in a field of 22—further weakening "left" influence in the central body.

The Farm Equipment Workers, ordered to merge with the UAW, have openly defied the authority of a CIO committee to speed the unity move.

**The appointment** of militant liberals with organizational experience continues at the state and federal level. Paul Weber, executive secretary of the Detroit Newspaper Guild, has been appointed press secretary by Michigan's Governor G. Mennen Williams. Eleanor Coakley, former president of the Toledo Newspaper Guild, is press-relations secretary for Tom Burke, new Representative from Toledo, himself a former secretary of the CIO Council. Frank Annunzio has been appointed head of the Illinois Department of Labor by Governor Adlai Stevenson. Ten years ago, Annunzio was a blacksmith who helped the Steelworkers' Union in the Republic Steel strike. While teaching at a technical high school during the day, he went to De Paul University nights and earned both bachelor and master degrees. He is 34 and head of the Illinois PAC.

**The Smith-Connolly Act,** under which the Communist Twelve are indicted, was hotly defended by the Communist Party itself during the war years. In fact, recently uncovered documents reveal that Louis Weinstock, Painters' Union (AFL) leader and nationally known Communist, worked for the indictment and prosecution of the Trotskyites who were imprisoned under the Smith Act. In 1944, when the Trotskyite Eighteen were under indictment, a group of delegates to Weinstock's District Council 9 asked for support to the accused. Weinstock opposed the motion. To strengthen his case, he wrote to Daniel Tobin, Sidney Hillman and Attorney General Francis Biddle for information and arguments in favor of the Smith Act and its use against the Trotskyites. Weinstock received a reply from the Attorney General's office, reading: "You may be assured that the basis of the prosecution in this case had nothing to do with activities on behalf of the labor movement." The letter was signed by Tom Clark, then Assistant Attorney General.

The Trotskyites repaid the Communists by turning the other cheek. They are backing the defense of the Stalinist Twelve.

The Stalinists refuse to reciprocate, however. They continue to boycott the defense campaign for James Kutcher, legless veteran fired from the Veterans' Administration for his Trotskyite affiliations.

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# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## SCHOLARS AND BUSINESSMEN

**by Harold A. Wolff**

ONCE UPON A TIME economics was a naïve young thing beloved of business. Enduring witnesses to this romance are the business schools, foundations and endowed professorships on which businessmen once lavished gifts. But about twenty years ago, this idyl came to an end. Economists took to spatting among themselves, and today, so the story goes, lock seven economists in a room and they will come out with eight theories. And businessmen, muttering about longhairs who never met a payroll, will invoke a plague on all of them.

THE AMERICAN ECONOMY, by Sumner H. Slichter (Alfred A. Knopf; $2.75).
INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMIC SCIENCE, by George Soule (The Viking Press; $2.50).
THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP, by Harwood F. Merrill, editor (The Harvard University Press; $2.50).
ECONOMICS FOR THE PRACTICAL MAN, by George Howe (Wilcox and Follett; $2.50).

In this era of deep cleavages in political and social policy, the divorce of the economist from the businessman is one of the most serious breaks of them all. It is the more dangerous because businessmen and economists are vieing for public votes of confidence in all the channels of communication. Therefore, it is of some moment that the current crop of economic books shows a widening gap.

When businessmen speak about *The Responsibilities of Business Leadership* or about *Economics for the Practical Man*, they repeat the dogma of "classical" economists going back to Adam Smith and Ricardo. Its mumbo-jumbo of supply-and-demand, surrounding the pricing mechanism with the legitimacy of natural law, has always been the best public-relations program that American business could ask. And since wages and profits are "prices" for work and entrepreneurial skill, they, too, are destined to whatever level they happen to attain in a free market. Competition, the Great Governor, is supposed to make certain that everyone gets as much—or as little—as the economic gods decree. And "equilibrium" is always there to assure that a free-enterprise economy will be the best of all possible worlds, with men and materials employed for the good of all. To this kind of economics business built temples.

But the writings of the economists show how far they have moved from this brand of natural law. Whether you take the conservatives—like Slichter—or the liberals—for whom Soule speaks brilliantly—you find that new considerations have arisen to drive a wedge between the corporation spokesman and the academic economist. One of these wedges is the idea of monopolistic competition, first elaborated by Edward Chamberlain (can't you hear the businessmen snort?) in a doctoral dissertation at Harvard in 1927. Its basic thesis is that business in the twentieth century is neither monopolistic (that's illegal) nor competitive (that's unprofitable). Most businesses—the best estimates run about two-thirds, and include everything from milk to steel—compete only in things that have nothing to do with price. Instead of price wars, we now have advertising skirmishes, battles of promotion and packaging. Gas stations wipe off your windshield; US Steel gives you the Theatre Guild on the Air. Full-page advertisements glorify the "law of supply and demand," which, of course, must be absorbed in the price of their product. But what such a price has to do with the "law of supply and demand" they don't and can't explain.

Nor will any spokesman for the business point of view tangle with the question: how can the millions of independent decisions by businessmen—on expansion, on dividends, on sinking funds—how can these keep the economy on an even keel? The approach to these questions is a second great cleavage that has grown up between the economist and the businessman, and it has to do with the impact of Keynes on our economic thinking.

**At about the time** that American economists were learning to talk the language of monopolistic competition, Keynes was beginning to prick holes in the old and comfortable notion that the business community, operating in accordance with economic "laws," could keep the resources of a nation fully employed at maximum output. Economists like Soule and Slichter argue about the validity of Keynesian details, but no one these days thinks economics without Keynes, any more than he thinks biology without Darwin or psychiatry without Freud.

This Keynesian motif in our economics keeps the problems of full employment in the foreground. Keynes and his disciples formalized the notion that, left to their own devices, people may save too much, and not buy up all the goods the economy produces. That's deflation. Or spend too much, and boost prices without necessarily increasing productive capacity. That's inflation, which is normally followed by crash. Liberal economists—as opposed to Socialists or Communists—look to the government to function as a balance wheel that, while leaving private enterprise free to make its decisions, takes steps to keep purchasing power and productive power in some orderly relationship.

But economics that talks in terms of Keynes and monopolistic competition is not the kind that profit-minded businessmen want to be chummy with. The new economics is, in effect, saying that what is good for business

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may for everyone else spell inflation or deflation and so add up to general misery. Better call them long-hairs and boost the advertising budget.

**George Soule's** *Introduction to Economic Science* and Sumner Slichter's *The American Economy* are two solid discussions of the state of the nation in the light of prevailing fashions in economic thought. "Economic science has progressed to the point where it can make realistic appraisal of possible choices for policy . . . consistent with high employment," is Soule's thesis, and Slichter agrees. Both are temperate: Soule is about as conservative as a liberal can be, and Slichter pushes conservatism as far to the Left as it will go. That they end up poles apart is an unhappy commentary on the relationship possible between economic thinking and business practice.

Soule speaks for the left-of-center economists who see salvation in a great increase in consumption. In no other way, he warns, can there be any incentive for business to invest, any outlet for the nation's savings. The principal object of our economic policy must be to increase the demand for needed goods and services, and Soule sees no evidence that business, alone, can do this. "How fatuous seems the belief that if only we sustain private enterprise without modification we shall be secure." Leaning heavily on studies of national income and national product, he urges a policy of government spending and taxing that would equate income and product at a high enough level to maintain full employment. With a plan laid out, he proposes, "give industrial managers the opportunity to coöperate before trying more drastic methods." Soule seems not to mind the obvious vagueness with which he tosses off the role of business or the intimidating suggestion of "drastic methods." Whatever business does, it is his opinion that manipulation of the national economic budget—the total income, spending and saving of the nation—"is an instrument which can be used to forestall either inflation or unemployment if we understand it properly and will consent to take the appropriate action."

To much of which Slichter—and remember he is a *liberal* conservative—comes up with the opposite answer. He, too, thinks we know enough economics to double our standard of living every forty years. But Slichter voices the destined-to-be-quoted view that "the American economy is a laboristic one," by which he means that "employees are the most influential group in the community and the country is run in their interest more than in the interest of any other economic group." This implies, among other things, that "unions may be expected to push up money wages faster than engineers and managers are able to raise the output per man hour." And this will lead to high prices and unemployment as, for example, when the powerful steel union—by high labor costs—holds down the willingness of the industry to expand and thus depresses the standard of living.

As for the future: "It looks as if wages would be fixed primarily in the interest of employees . . . [with] little consideration for the owners of business enterprise and the providers of investment funds." Slichter warns that labor may make us "less a community with accepted common interests . . . more a collection of independent groups, each narrowly pursuing its own concerns." (Really, Professor, what about the NAM, the tariff touters, the trade associations, the lobbies?)

The cause of ups and downs in the business cycle, according to this right-of-center economics, is the rise and fall in the investor's view of the future. Slichter is more worried about the "chronic shortage of investment-seeking funds" than he is about how low-income families can pay the grocer. Only when things look good to them will businessmen spend their cash, draw on their credit, invest their earnings. When things look bad, they "retrench," and that means bust.

And what should we do about it? We ought by tax rebates to bribe businessmen, so that they will spend more and invest more in risky businesses. So Slichter, for example, asserts: "It is plain that the standard of living of the country cannot rise satisfactorily unless industry is able to increase greatly the output of goods. This means more and better plant and machines." Certainly in agriculture and in most soft-goods lines, we have the capacity to produce more, if the people who need food and clothing had the money to buy them. In housing, what we need is not just more houses, but more low-priced houses. Yet Slichter ignores completely the fact that unless the consumers have enough money to buy with, and enough sense of security to spend freely the money they do have, there will be no reason for business to invest. In fact, it would be stupid if they did invest until they saw a market broad and stable enough for the present plant.

On the other hand, Soule seems blithely unconcerned with the fact that the policies he advocates would drive business to cover and cut private investment to the bone, which would depress the economy indefinitely.

**But if Slichter** and Soule disagree as to how to apply economics, at least they are both very practical men. Meanwhile businessmen, in the presence of the same economic facts, tend to go mystic. *Economics for the Practical Man*, probably the most inappropriately titled book of the year, is the product of a mechanical engineer turned real-estate promoter. What comes out is economics fifty years behind what every "practical man" knows from his own experience.

Only this type of business thinking can write a chapter on "Consumption" without relating it to income or purchasing power. Or deplore labor unions as working against "the operation of economic laws," and inspired by "criminal fakers" who should be "chased into oblivion" by The Practical Man. There is even a fantastic doffing of the hat to the good that business cycles do, by making new opportunities and establishing new groups of "monied people." Of course, there is no place for monopolistic competition in this economics, and no discussion of the Keynesian approach. But there is the traditional chapter

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damning government action in the economic sphere and a nostalgic appeal for "a simpler life in government."

**In about the same** tone are the papers by five businessmen collected in *The Responsibilities of Business Leadership*, a collection of statements on what American business owes the public, the employee, the consumer, the stockholders and the world. Clarence Francis, chairman of the Board of General Foods, sets the tone for the book when he urges business to "pour forth goods in abundance," and then literally says not a word about any of the things that might keep business from doing just that. Neither do Jack Straus of Macy's, or Richard R. Dupree of Procter and Gamble, or the other contributors, whose discussions of the realities of our economic life are stirring encomia on the virtues of freedom. They come to no grips with the problem of how to keep 60 million people at work, or how to get prices down to the point where people can buy the things that business produces. Those problems the hard-boiled businessmen seem willing to leave to the "long-hairs."

All of which adds up to a strange state of affairs, and one which bodes ill for the days ahead. It is the academic economist who is trying to come to grips with the problems that face business. Business, meanwhile, seems hell-bent on climbing higher and higher into its ivory tower.

## FICTION PARADE

THE WALL AND OTHER STORIES, by Jean-Paul Sartre (New Directions; Limited edition, $7.50).

ON THIS SIDE NOTHING, by Alex Comfort (The Viking Press; $2.50).

SUZANNE AND JOSEPH, by Georges Duhamel (Henry Holt and Company; $3.50).

THE SIMPLEST ACCOUNT of the five short stories collected in *The Wall* is that they are about what your Aunt Jennie would call "unpleasant people." It is true that these characters are a brutal, unsympathetic lot, caught, for all we care, in desperate situations—planning murders, facing execution, or slipping into madness. The most impressive thing about the book, rising from it like a stench, is a disgust for life, a sense of universal defilement. The insistence on the physical in the stories is indistinguishable from an aversion to it. "God, how rotten love is." These people have a horror of shaking hands. A sample of expediency: "It's much harder to consider people as ants when you're on the same plane as they are: they *touch* you." This aversion results inevitably in an atrophy of all human sympathy: "Pity disgusts me, or rather it horrifies me."

In one of these stories ("The Childhood of a Leader"), the author maintains an ironic detachment from his subject and for this reason it is by far the best in the book. In the others the original impact and final weakness is the immediacy with which we participate in the experience of disgust. At a rare best, this is the disgust of Swift for the Yahoos; more frequently, it is the cloacal obsession of infancy. The effect diminishes as we reread the stories, for we discover that we are not as shocked as all that by the commonplace bodily functions.

**Alex Comfort's novel** is the story of the ghetto in an unnamed North African city from the time it is closed by the Germans until it is liberated by the British. Schmul Weinstock is one member of a family there that "had gathered after journeys of greater or lesser discomfort" from all over Europe. Schmul's journey, by way of the Spanish war, had been a long adventure of alienation in which he had come to believe that "one place was as good as another." By the time he reached the family gathering place, "there was beginning to be a point beyond which the process of escaping became a greater suffering than death would have been." In fact, death has become the lesser of a number of evils, and life for Schmul (and, by extension, for others in his plight) had been reduced to the mere instinctive struggle for survival. Schmul reflects: "I used to think, When shall I get back to normal living? Now I think, How long shall I go on living at all?" In this shrinking margin of existence, a writer is hard put to create fiction; the reader is not likely to be more concerned than Schmul himself about his actions or his fate. And since he is the central consciousness, through whom the story is told in the first person, the blighting indifference obscures the other characters too.

But the best thing about the book is part of this very anonymity: the sense of a faceless crowd of exiles, modern nomads, surviving on a diminishing subsistence, moral and physical. As Comfort describes their situation and accounts for their survival: "The poor had never lost touch with the knowledge of dispossession which circulated in their blood."

**With the two stories,** "Suzanne" and "Joseph," published in one volume, Georges Duhamel closes his series of Pasquier novels. They are connected only by passing references in one story to characters in the other. Suzanne Pasquier is an actress who deserts the theatre, after a quarrel with her director, for an interlude in the country with remote cousins, the Baudouin family. Suzanne is ostensibly the protagonist, but she exists solely to introduce her country cousins.

Theirs is the kind of family, not unfamiliar in recent years, that infatuates an author until he suspends all intelligence in a silly grin of delight. As a matter of fact, the publishers, correctly but more damagingly than they suppose, compare the Baudouins to the Sycamores of "You Can't Take It with You" and the Sangers of *The Constant Nymph*. They are a handsome, talented, bewitching crew of self-styled "madcaps" who live an unconventional and idyllic existence in a beautiful old house, dressing up in costumes or performing on innumerable musical instruments. "An educated visitor was bound to be put in mind of" Bach surrounded by his family. As an arch concession to the realities: "From the description of this legendary household one might suppose that it had been spared the lesser

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and greater trials of life by a beneficent Providence, but that would be a mistake. The Baudouins had enjoyed no special privilege in respect to measles or chicken-pox . . . mumps and ear-ache."

The second story is made of sterner stuff; *it* might be compared to the worst of Galsworthy. Joseph Pasquier is the ruthless giant of high finance who speaks "through clenched teeth" on the most casual matters, neglects his family, and collects paintings. "What he had was the instinct . . . of ownership, of personal proprietorship." Most of the book is a dither of business appointments, string-pulling and shady deals, all recounted at garrulous length for their own sake. They may be intended to force the *illusion* of realism, but they are never more convincing than crude backdrop scenery, rigged up, in this case, for a drama that never occurs.

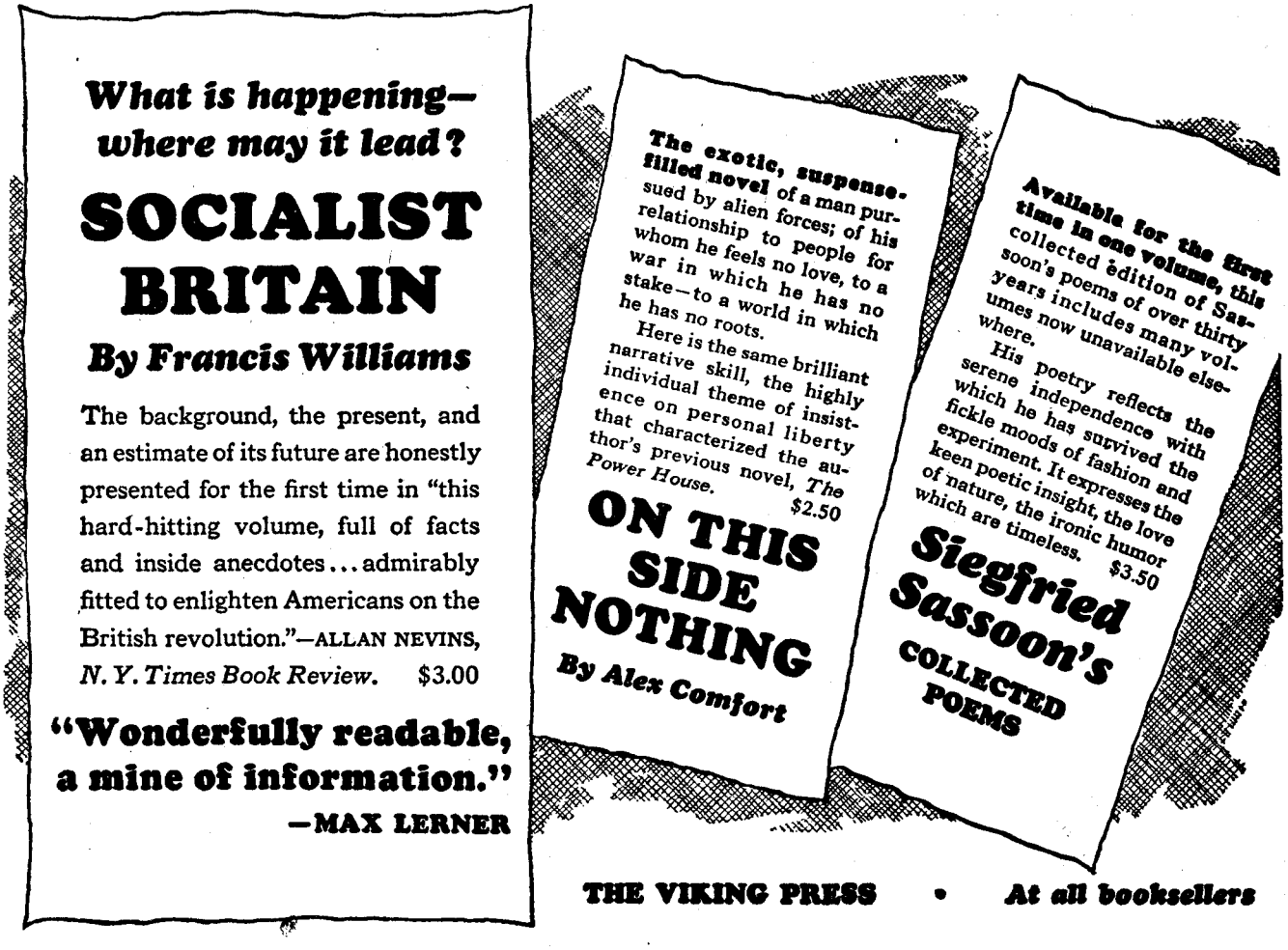
JOHN FARRELLY

## THEATRE: Personal But Pertinent

THERE IS an extraordinary quality of salesmanship about "Kiss Me, Kate" (at the Century). Its looks assure a hit. Before we have heard a line or a tune of it, we are gratified by a sense of bright opulence, of mechanically perfect luxury.

A good deal of the credit for this twentieth-century magic must go to Lemuel Ayers whose sets and costumes do far more than merely decorate the stage. They create an atmosphere in which one feels entirely snug, safe and smart, as if one had suddenly entered a world of endless money and convenience, a world in which the real American dream of deathless success has come true. Once we have become enmeshed in this black-market wonderland, nothing can go amiss, no more questions need be asked.

I found the book of "Kiss Me, Kate"—an amalgam of Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" in World Fair capsule style with movie and vaudeville shenanigans about an acting couple who are having marital trouble—pretty much of a bore. I thought most of Cole Porter's score and lyrics inferior to "What Is This Thing Called Love?", "You're the Tops," "I Get a Kick Out of You." I was pleased with the song called "Where Is the Life That Late I Led?," and the ensemble number "Too Darned Hot" seemed to me a thoroughly expert job of putting over—through dance, orchestral arrangement and setting—a fairly conventional mu-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sical-comedy notion. Alfred Drake worked manfully and engagingly to keep the book lively, and Patricia Morison satisfies.

Lest anyone get the impression these remarks imply some mischief, I hasten to point out that I am more concerned here with general principles than with the nature of an individual offering. It is difficult to render in words the exact quality of any non-literary art form, and, believe it or not, musical comedy is such a form. The only way to convey what a work of art means to you is to translate your impression of it into terms that are not those of art. The sophisticated musical today—of which "Kiss Me, Kate" is an outstanding example—seems to me somehow to have an attractiveness akin to that of a splendiferous bathroom, a top-notch refrigerator or a tony night club. The humor of the new-style musicals strikes me generally as an echo of the columnists' gossip, their glamor a reflection of expensive advertisement.

While all these things may be commendable, their sublimation in the shape of a musical show usually strikes me cold; I have a feeling, when I see one, that I am being sold. On the other hand, when I see Ethel Merman in such an old-fashioned piece as "Annie Get Your Gun" I am warmed by a substantial sense of vulgar geniality that might be compared to eating good corned beef at a noisy but friendly delicatessen.

**This excursion** outside the confines of the straight review brings me to a question which I should like to discuss with my readers. It has occurred to me that some of my recent comments on acting and staging of generally admired productions may have sounded unduly captious and severe. Why shouldn't I agree that Boyer is "superb" in "Red Gloves," since I admit he is a good actor? Why should I be reserved and even tough with Rex Harrison and Joyce Redman, as indeed with the whole production of "Anne of the Thousand Days," when they are all undoubtedly better than average? Why am I harsh about the direction of "The Madwoman of Chaillot," though I am eager to see this delightful play reach a wide audience?

To answer these questions will entail the writing of several articles. For the moment I mean only to open the discussion. I do not believe in razz reviews any more than I do in raves. Both are closer to gossip and publicity than to criticism. Criticism means, not fault finding, but *appreciation.* The first step in appreciation is vision—seeing and feeling; the second step is the definition of what has been seen and felt; the final step is to attempt to relate one's opinions and definitions to values outside the theatre—to life itself.

The sharper and more discriminating our appreciation of the theatre, the more interesting the theatre be-


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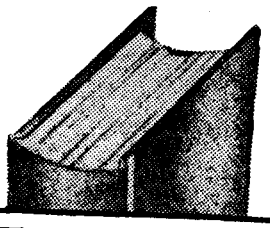

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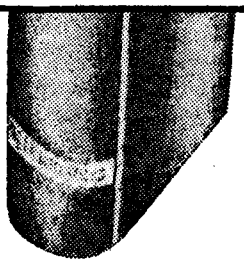

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comes. One of the signs of its deterioration since the twenties can be read in our diminishing concern with everything beyond brute effectiveness, which, put more bluntly, means box-office values. Much highfalutin nonsense was poured out some twenty-five years ago about stylization, new methods of stage setting and lighting, schools of acting, etc., but all of this helped keep the theatre exciting, and stimulated both theatre people and audiences to keener attention. The type of criticism which only slaps a commercial encomium on a production may help someone to a Hollywood contract; it rarely inspires anyone to better work or greater understanding.

If the theatre is an art, then it must be capable of yielding some of the results in human significance that we associate with the other arts. When I speak of the theatre, however, I do not speak of it simply as a subsidiary or annex of literature. When and in what way do acting and directing—the whole process of theatrical production—become creative? This is the central issue to which I shall be obliged to return to reply to the initial query apropos of my "toughness," as well as to arrive at some standard for theatrical judgment.

HAROLD CLURMAN

## ON THE AIR: Berlin to St. Louis

BROADCASTING has been making history of a sort. Television, using for the first time the new coaxial cable, has linked the Eastern video networks with the Midwest. Radio, in another stupendous, full-throated, painfully prepared, hour-long documentary on the ABC network, reached for the moon—and landed on its nose.

The documentary's disaster holds certain lessons for radio at large, though the responsibility falls on one man, Robert Saudek, ABC's vice-president in charge of public affairs, who shot the works on "The Berlin Story." Everything was his, from conception to execution. One more explosion of this kind will send radio—which has been so proud of its documentaries—back to the reading of Swinburne in the name of public service. Perhaps that isn't a bad idea. At least there would be a writer in the team, a detail Saudek forgot.

In August of 1946, Saudek, a modest servant at ABC, was allowed to produce a half-hour program commemorating the bomb over Hiroshima. Martin Andrews, the same great director who put "The Berlin Story" on the air, had direct charge of the Hiroshima anniversary piece. Clifton Fadiman was narrator, and the casting was superb. But above all and to begin with, there was a script, done by one of the finest hands in the business, Lawrence Menkin. It was called "Unhappy Birthday." But for the obscure network sub-executive who had picked the right people, the day was bright. Bob Saudek was made.

**Saudek's career** reached its zenith last spring when he booked ABC for "V.D.—A Conspiracy of Silence." While he had continued to lean on Andrews up to that time—and since—he also continued to use writers, Erik Barnouw, Ira Marion, John Hersey among them. In his next one, "Communism: U. S. Brand," he still employed a writer. Most professional critics praised Saudek for that one, this reviewer (and *Variety*) dissenting.

But for the latest spectacle Saudek really rolled up his sleeves. He did the research, traveling to Berlin for a month, vice-presidential toga and all. He did the principal writing—although he did have to call upon subordinates occasionally to bail him out. He prescribed the sound—mainly the fury of airplanes in flight. He even picked the music. The prescription called for "full trombone choir" to open the show with the Loge motif from "Die Walküre" and ordered the brass to restate the theme "full and

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foreboding" five seconds later. All David Broekman, as conductor, had to do was wave a stick. The mimeographing of the press releases was delegated to menials.

**The account** given on this hour is well-known. It is the one we have been reading since the cold war became hot news. Once again, as in his "Communism" program, Saudek made no effort whatever at balance. For instance, the near-solution of the Berlin crisis through the tentative currency agreement of last August received no mention. Neither did President Truman's plan to send Justice Vinson to Moscow—certainly part of the Berlin story. An accurate quotation from Marshal Sokolovsky was prefaced by the narrator's characterization of the words as a "torpedo." The actor impersonating Communist Friedrich Ebert had to watch the script's injunction that he was to be "screaming."

That's not telling "both" sides of an issue as the law prescribes and the listeners' interests demand. We are not at war yet, and Tom Dewey has not been elected President. It is not in the "public interest, convenience or necessity" to smear the warpaint over our kilocycles and to discredit the radio documentary through awkward egotism.

Additionally, the writing was dull at times, and always at precisely those moments when the script needed a lift at least as heroic as the Berlin air operation it was glorifying. Repetition to the point where devices not too original in the first place were made tiresome, montages that had no focus and ran on endlessly, scrambling that stemmed directly from fuzzy concepts motivated by more piety than skill—all these factors were no justification for Saudek's hogging of the act.

Saudek was so enamored of his "Story" that, before it went on the air, he was sure it would bear rebroadcast. He scheduled it for a repeat hour a week later (January 17). I don't know yet what his Hooper was. But I hope the listeners' protests against the waste of *our* airtime was loud enough.

The story was entirely different on television's big show the night video reached for the first time all the way from the Eastern Seaboard to the Mississippi. After some official speeches, plus an interesting AT&T film explaining the coaxial cable, an hour was divided for brief program samples furnished by each of the four networks.

For the first time, the East Coast programs reached television viewers in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Toledo, Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Louis. Those who tuned in know now why Milton Berle (NBC) really is video's No. 1 star comedian; how Arthur Godfrey's (CBS) videogenic charm registers; and why Ted Steele (DuMont) draws audiences. The ABC network was the only one that provided a fresh treat for us Easterners by bringing its production of "Stand By for Crime," which proved that Chicago can also originate good, dramatic shows.

None of the networks had time on this joint venture to exhibit enough of its wares. Consequently, each confined its 15-minute period to the type of program that might, conceivably, intrigue the "broadest" audiences—and when that's the approach on a mass-medium, breadth is likely to be measured by ultra-popular rather than highly artistic standards.

I think NBC's "Philco Theatre," ABC's "Actors' Studio," DuMont's "Court of Current Issues" and CBS's "Studio One" illustrate more accurately than the specimens shown that the coaxial cable will be "only as good as the programs it carries." That is what Dr. Frank Stanton, president of CBS, promised in his portion of the dedicatory program. I am sure his three network colleagues agreed with him. But with the extension of the video network facilities to more than thirty stations in seventeen cities, the decision is now in our hands. By breathing down the broadcasters' necks, we can keep it that way.

**Broad-canvas** network documentaries are frequently omitted from advance scheduling because the broadcasters wait too long to find an "open"—*i.e.*, unsponsored—spot on their log. Here is one for which there is early warning. On the night of Wednesday, February 2, from 10 to 11, CBS will broadcast "Mind in the Shadow," a study of mental health in the US. Written by Arnold Perl, produced by Werner Michel and starring Eddie Albert, it should be worth the selective listener's time. SAUL CARSON

## MOVIES: Good Intentions

THE FRENCH PRODUCTION of Dostoevsky's "The Eternal Husband," directed by Pierre Billon and with Raimu in the title role, poses a recurrent critical problem for which there is no satisfactory solution. The picture is a striking example of the screen adaptation which, in itself a performance superior to the run of films, yet falls far short of the original author's intent and penetration. If one condemns such a work for not rising to its great occasion (always a temptation, since the very decision to adapt a work of genius is an act of arrogance), one is apt to drive readers away from a performance that would please them more than most; on the other hand, to praise it on its own terms and with no reference to the model is to be a party to vulgarization.

*The Eternal Husband* as Dostoevsky wrote it is a masterpiece. It is short and does not attempt to do a great deal, but its atmosphere of unseemly excitement, its delicate shifting of the moral balance from one protagonist to the other, its conflict established directly between the souls of men comprehend as much about guilt and love and the motives impelling the human spirit as any writer has accomplished in a like form.

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The film does not change the story; it lowers it, clarifies it, plots it. Where the novelist saw a complex of motives, the movie makes a choice; where the book makes its point by unresolved emotion, the picture drives its argument with a finger in the ribs. Dostoevsky's husband is not a readily understood or a very likable fellow; he is not to be tolerated and yet he must be loved. In the guise of Raimu, he is both easily comprehended and directly sympathetic.

As the picture unreels the story of an elderly cuckold who comes to Petersburg to punish, perhaps to execute, his dead wife's lover; as he sacrifices the child that is his in name to this purpose; as he dissipates and plays the fool in a new betrothal, you feel again and again like crying out: "Yes, that's the way it all happened, but you *still* don't understand." The facts are there very much as Dostoevsky wrote them; the feeling is mostly gone.

Raimu plays well the part as it was given to him; it is not his fault if that falls short of what the novelist had in mind. He is formidable where the original was feverish, ominous where the other was possessed, absurd where the real husband was terrifying. But he produces a full-bodied and plausible character, one far more individual than the screen customarily offers. He shows the hatred and he demon strates the revenge; he cannot, for a number of reasons, show the love and prove the triumph. This film, the last before his death, is good for our memory of Raimu. As for the memory of Dostoevsky, it is in no immediate danger.

**On learning** that "The Last Stop" is a Polish-made film based on experiences in Auschwitz in the last half of the war, some people may decide to avoid it out of a reluctance to be distressed. They need not hesitate for this reason: "The Last Stop" is not a harrowing picture. Given the subject, I do not think it is harrowing enough.

The picture was made, quite apparently, to tell the world, but what is told is not perhaps what you would expect. Its purpose is less to force us to look again upon the almost unbelievable face of Fascism as to demonstrate the dauntlessness and resourcefulness of Communists under extreme pressure.

The story develops as a conflict between a cell of political prisoners in the women's camp and the prison directors, aided by brutalized trusties. The Communists are superior women (they are also for the most part superior actors) and their intelligence, courage and poise give them so great an advantage over their captors that eventual victory never seems in much doubt. You know, by logic, that they could be marched out any morning to the ever-smoking crematoria, but there are conventions in a film script that do not permit this disposition of sympathetic characters. "The Last Stop," in other words, obeys the laws of drama.

This focus on plot and character rather than on the facts of Auschwitz has the effect of cushioning the horror. People are dragged off to be burned, babies are poisoned, the fur coats of the dead appear on the backs of the Aryan bitches, but we can still take comfort in the belief that our heroines will survive. The shadows are destroyed, the elite battle on, and the process of identification protects us in the audience.

But if "The Last Stop" is a melodrama, then it must be classed as entertainment, and it becomes a matter of taste whether you can be entertained by a film with such a background. What is shown is, I have no doubt, the truth. The slaves did organize, the Communists were often the strongest and most resourceful, the overseers were unfit even for the barely human company of the SS. And the film makes clear in dialogue and action that the simple policy of the camp


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was mass extermination. In terms of fact and except for some awkward cuts to reduce the running time to program length, "The Last Stop" does its work effectively. But the necessity for showing Auschwitz as a battleground of the unbreakable proletariat puts it at least in the same frame of reference with, say, the Siberian mines of the Czar or a Georgia chain gang. It is cruel, it is evil, but it is still sane and it can still be endured. And concentration camps, there is plenty of evidence to show, were madhouses of horror with the lunatics in charge of the damned.

**Twentieth Century-Fox** admits to releasing the new British picture, "This *Was* a Woman," in America, and a man named Marcel Hellman is credited with producing it, but who provided the studio facilities and financial backing is not divulged. This reticence is unusual but under the circumstances understandable.

The woman who *was* is played by Sonia Dresdel, a Bela Lugosi in skirts. Her assignment is to show how ambition frustrated will curdle and produce in its possessor a compulsion to ghoulish plotting. This she does by waggling luxuriant eyebrows, drawing down the corners of her mouth and flapping her garments in imitation of a turkey buzzard. Among other pleasantries, she stimulates an innocent housemaid with French novels until the poor girl, on the verge of nymphomania, bursts into the garden and alienates the affections of madam's son-in-law. In addition to this bit of unusual skulduggery, Lady Macbeth of Tooting destroys the family dog, cuts her husband's prize roses, feeds him arsenic, and attempts a middle-aged seduction.

The year is young, but already Miss Dresdel has made her claim to the most grotesque performance of the most intractable script of 1949. No doubt she was told to act that way, but actresses (particularly mature actresses said to be on loan from the Old Vic) are not supposed to lose their wits entirely when they face a camera.

ROBERT HATCH

## MUSIC: Opera on Broadway

AN ITS FIRST Broadway showing, Benjamin Britten's "The Rape of Lucretia" drew as diversified a set of notices in the daily press as any theatre piece within memory. It received double linage, for both music and theatre critics attended the première, and in some cases both wrote about it; and many of the music critics went back a second time to assess the members of the alternate cast. The critics did not line up according to professional bias; within each category, the witnesses expressed sharply opposed views. Virgil Thomson, of the *Herald Tribune*, found Ronald Duncan's text "pompous, wandering and incredibly garrulous," the theme of the play "thoroughly silly and without reality" and the music without "sufficient intrinsic interest to hold a two-hour show together." Olin Downes, of the *Times*, on the other hand, thought the libretto "singable, and an effective dramatic vehicle," and considered the score "far and away the most mature, flexible and distinguished composing that Benjamin Britten has yet done for the lyric theatre."

**Such head-on collisions** must confuse people who simply want to know whether the show at the Ziegfeld is a good one. But they prove that this production, whatever its ultimate fate at the box office, has made an unusually forceful impact upon New York's cultural consciousness. The Broadway staging of a contemporary opera, serious in its intent and exigent in its demands upon the audience, is an event without precedent since "Cavalleria Rusticana" was similarly presented as a venture in popular theatre two generations ago.

Every reviewer, consequently, was caught without ready-made standards of judgment. The new piece moved far outside the usual purview of the drama critics, for it could not be measured by the yardstick they could use upon "Kiss Me, Kate"—or even upon "The Medium," a featherweight contrivance alongside the sophisticated musical machinery of "The Rape of Lucretia." The music critics, better equipped to investigate the qualities of a new opera, were not accustomed to project themselves over into the thinking of the huge legitimate-theatre audience which the sponsors of "Lucretia" hope to attract in addition to experienced operagoers.

Whether "The Rape of Lucretia" is a good music-drama or not—and I belong to the party of those who think it is—it is a real landmark in local theatrical and musical history. Except for "The Medium," which undoubtedly helped break the ice for the present more ambitious project, we had never before seen a contemporary opera professionally mounted, costumed and lighted as effectively as a Broadway musical; directed by a good craftsman (Agnes de Mille) who understands American taste and who was given enough rehearsal time to realize the purposes of her direction; and performed by a cast chosen because every member of it could act as well as sing.

As a production, "The Rape of Lucretia" is a miracle of intelligent planning and an object lesson to every opera-producing organization from the Metropolitan down, or up, to the New York City Opera Company. The scenery and costumes designed for the English production by John Piper, and borrowed for the occasion, suit the tone of the piece exactly, with a sort of poetic literalism that corresponds to the texture of both Duncan's libretto and Britten's score. Miss de Mille has visualized the action in a fusion of realistic gesture, miming and choreography—and with just about the right number of Roman touches—that is right in essence, even if some of the passing details seem a bit studied. The singers, among whom Kitty Carlisle is the least impressive,

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have good voices, real style, and reasonably understandable diction. Most important of all, the conductor, Paul Breisach, controls the musical aspects of the performance with a mastery which is complete, flexible and sensitive. The whole production makes the Metropolitan's shoddy version of Britten's more grandiose opera, "Peter Grimes," look sick; and if the management is shrewd, its plan to present "Peter Grimes" this winter will be quietly shelved, to avoid the inevitable comparisons.

If I were to offer an extended opinion on "The Rape of Lucretia," I should merely be repeating myself, since I expressed a page of satisfac tion with the work when it was given its American première in Chicago in 1947, and found no reason to alter my state of mind nineteen months later. Two fairly frequent objections of New York reviewers I cannot understand: I do not think that the plot wanders, even though the accompanying text is handed back and forth between the actors and the Male and Female Chorus; and I do not think that the vocal parts are unsingable or that the prosody (most of the time) is clumsy. CECIL SMITH

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Left, Right

SIR: The article entitled "The Broad Middle Way," by Joe Miller, in "The Week" of the December 6 issue of the *New Republic* was, it seemed to me, rather confusing and certainly disappointing and irritating.

Having subscribed to the *NR* for well over a year now, I have come to expect from it a clear, honest, and incisive report of significant news. The report by Mr. Miller on the CIO convention is pretty far from this. He used the word "right" or "rightist" 14 times and the word "left" or "leftist" 27 times. This rapid repetition of an apparently key word with apparently esoteric meanings left me pretty much in the dark about the convention.

The word "left" is usually equated in the *NR* with non-Communist democratic planning and civil liberties, yet Mr. Miller, at least in parts of his article, identifies the words "left" and Communist. Is this the way "left" is defined in labor circles? If it is, I think that Mr. Miller should have made it clear that he was using the word in a special sense. And if the labor "right" is the *NR* "left," why did not Mr. Miller give fuller analysis why the labor "right" was giving so much attention to such a superficial issue as repudiating Communists and so little attention to the issues that deal with the building of a world where Communism is an irrelevant choice?

A. RAYMOND ANDERSON
Youth Director, Methodist Youth Fellowship

*Detroit, Mich.*

### To the Barricades!

SIR: I cannot believe that the editors of the *New Republic* can be so naïve and credulous as to think they will secure permanently the reforms they advocate in their State of the Union message (the *NR*, January 10) without socialism. You have the cart before the horse. You are trying to adopt the beneficent results of socialism under capitalism....

One does not have to be a Marxist to know that the greatest evil today, and the cause of many of our ills, is the exploitation of man by man. Until you do away with this evil you are only playing around. For example, I have seen millions of acres of fertile land become almost worthless due to erosion brought by private ownership.

One does not have to be a Communist, only an economist, to know that capitalism will ultimately collapse or destroy itself.

*Midlothian, Tex.* J. HAYDEN MOORE SR.

### Late Election Returns

SIR: It is hard to understand how nearly every writer fails to see the part played by the Far West in Truman's election; and this includes Harold J. Laski (the *NR*, December 20). The 11 states north of Virginia and east of Ohio gave Dewey 129 electoral votes, Truman 20.

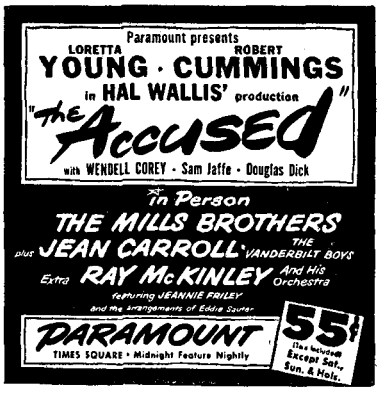
By sections Truman's majorities were:

| | |
|---|---|
| The South..... | 78 |
| Far West..... | 59 |
| Midwest ..... | 47 |

Truman won the Far West on the issue of public power and flood control on a valley or regional basis, and including conservation in general. Labor and farmers were factors; but the first cause of the upheaval was the fight for public power.

*Prosser, Wash.* ELIHU BOWLES


MOTION PICTURE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